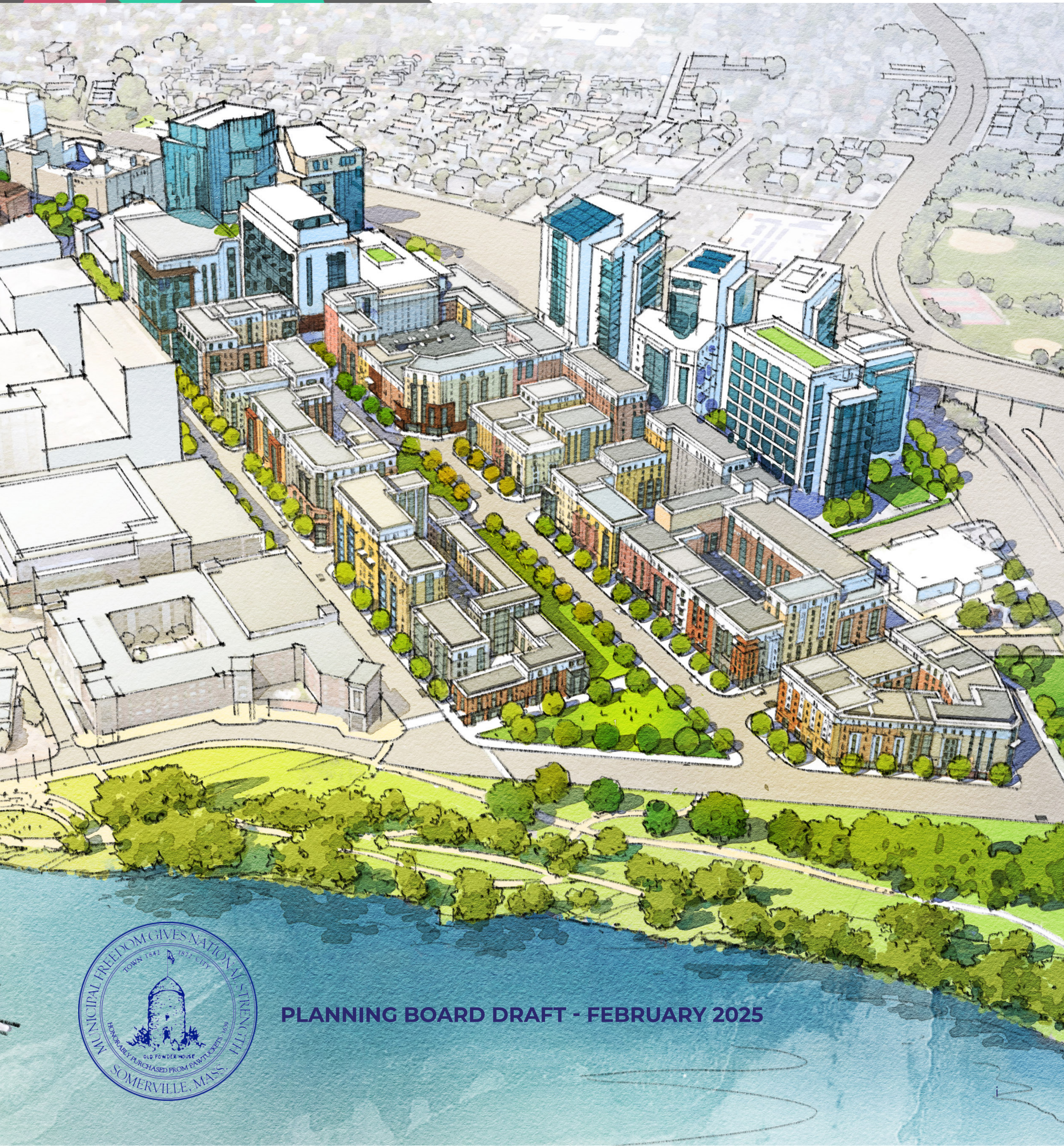
ASSEMBLY SQUARE
Neighborhood Plan



SOMERVILLE, MASS.

PLANNING BOARD DRAFT - FEBRUARY 2025

PLAN TYPES & CHARACTERISTICS

The Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development (OSPCD) collaborates with multiple other city departments to produce and implement several types of plans and studies for the City of Somerville.

1

Comprehensive Plan

SomerVision 2040 is Somerville's comprehensive master plan.

SomerVision 2040
Comprehensive Plan Update | 2010 - 2040
City of Somerville, Massachusetts
Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone
Adopted October 2021
SomerVision2040.com

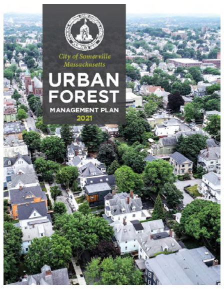
- **Scope**: Entire municipality and all topics
- **Time Horizon**: 20-30 years
- **Preparation Time**: 2-3 years
- **Level of Detail**: Moderate

2

System Plan

The Bicycle Network Plan and Urban Forest Management Plan are examples of system plans.

BIKE SOMERVILLE
CITY OF SOMERVILLE BICYCLE NETWORK PLAN


City of Somerville Massachusetts
URBAN FOREST
MANAGEMENT PLAN
2021

- **Scope**: Entire municipality for a specific subject matter
- **Time Horizon**: 5-20 years
- **Preparation Time**: 1-2 years
- **Level of Detail**: High

3

Area Plan

This plan for Assembly Square is an area plan. The neighborhood plans for Union Square, Brickbottom, and Davis Square and the station area plans for Gilman Square and Lowell Street are other examples of area plans.

ASSEMBLY SQUARE
Neighborhood Plan Update
PUBLIC DRAFT - JUNE 2024

UNION SQUARE
NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

- **Scope**: Place specific for local issues
- **Time Horizon**: 5-10 years
- **Preparation Time**: 6-12 mos
- **Level of Detail**: High

4

Specific Plan

The Union Square Streetscape Reconstruction Project and the Armory Master Plan are examples of specific plans.

UNION SQUARE PLAZA & STREETSCAPE PROJECT
25% DESIGN IDEAS AND VISION
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
FOR MORE INFORMATION CHECK OUT

- **Scope**: Detailed standards for development; implements other planning
- **Time Horizon**: 2-20 years
- **Preparation Time**: 1-2 years
- **Level of Detail**: Very High

5

Strategic or Action Plan

The Pollinator Action Plan, Cultural Capacity Plan, and Digital Equity Plan are examples of strategic or action plans.

SOMERVILLE
POLLINATOR
ACTION PLAN

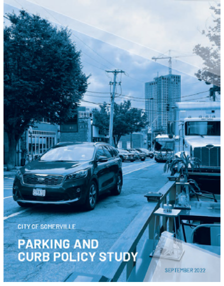
SOMERVILLE
CULTURAL
CAPACITY
PLAN

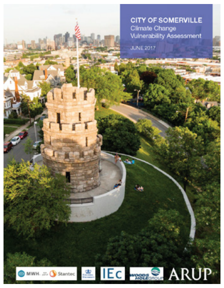
- **Scope**: Short-term service delivery and quality of life; implements other planning
- **Time Horizon**: 1-5 years
- **Preparation Time**: 3-12 mos
- **Level of Detail**: Moderate

6

Study

The Broadway Corridor Zoning Study, Parking & Curb Use Study, Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment, and Housing Needs Assessment are examples of studies.


CITY OF SOMERVILLE
PARKING AND
CURB POLICY STUDY
SEPTEMBER 2022


CITY OF SOMERVILLE
Climate Change
Vulnerability Assessment
JUNE 2017
IEc
ARUP

- **Scope**: Research and analysis of a specific topic; informs other planning
- **Time Horizon**: Varies
- **Preparation Time**: 1-12 mos
- **Level of Detail**: Very High

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RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

Although OSPCD manages most plan production, several other elected officials, appointed boards or commissions, city departments, state agencies, or private parties share the responsibility for plan implementation.

Elected Officials

Mayor: Prepares the annual municipal budget; determines the timing and type of the City's planning efforts

City Council: Approves budget appropriations; approves community preservation act funding appropriations; adopts zoning amendments; adopts municipal ordinances

Appointed Board or Commissions

Planning Board: Approves the comprehensive plan subject to state law; requires development impact mitigation; provides recommendations to the City Council

Urban Design Commission: Provides architectural and public realm design recommendations to property owners and the Planning Board

City Departments

Arts Council: Develops the City's arts and cultural plans; administers programs supporting local artists; oversees multiple arts events

Capital Projects: Oversees development of the City's municipal buildings

Economic Development: Develops and administers the City's workforce development program and small business assistance programs; Division of OSPCD

Engineering: Oversees development of the city's utility infrastructure; administers the Pavement & Sidewalk Management Program; develops final designs for roadway improvements

Housing: Administers the affordable housing program; prepares various housing studies; Division of OSPCD

Mobility: Installs quick build traffic control devices & bicycle infrastructure; develops concept designs for roadway improvements; develops the City's transportation plans; administers the Transportation Demand Management program; Division of OSPCD

Parking Department: Regulates traffic movement in public rights-of-way; installs and maintains all street signage, manages on-street parking permits and parking lots

Planning, Preservation, & Zoning: Develops the City's long-range comprehensive and area plans, develops zoning amendments, provides permit process administration to Boards & Commissions; Division of OSPCD

Public Space & Urban Forestry: Develops concept designs for streetscape improvements; develops the City's urban forest & public realm improvement plans; develops specific plans for city parks; Division of OSPCD

Sustainability & Environment: Develops the City's sustainability and climate change action plans and studies; including climate resilience efforts, community electrification & climate change education and outreach

State Agencies

MassDOT: Oversees roads, public transit, aeronautics, and transportation licensing and registration in the state of Massachusetts

MBTA: Operates most public transportation services in Greater Boston, Massachusetts

Private Parties

BlueBikes: Operates the bike rental (sharing) system in Greater Boston, Massachusetts

Property Owners: Builds and maintains privately owned buildings; rents or leases space to residential and commercial tenants

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DOVER, KOHL & PARTNERS
town planning

STREETPLANS
MIAMI NEW YORK

ZANETTA
ILLUSTRATION

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ES. Executive Summary

The executive summary outlines the main ideas for the Assembly Square neighborhood.

ASSEMBLY SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Assembly Square is Somerville's newest and most rapidly growing neighborhood. Originally an industrial site, the area evolved into a suburban shopping hub before becoming a mixed-use main street. The first Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan reflected community demands for transit access and mixed-use development at this location. As a result of continuous community involvement, the plan included the creation of the Assembly Square Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Station, Assembly Row, and Mass General Brigham as well as changes to the Assembly Marketplace.

Today, many planned construction projects are continuing Assembly Square's transformation, creating a need for an updated community plan. With a refreshed vision in place, these new developments can create the neighborhood that all Somerville residents want.

PUBLIC PROCESS

The City hired Dover, Kohl & Partners (also called "the design team") to assist with an open public process to develop a cohesive vision for Assembly Square. The City's SomerVoice website held information about the neighborhood plan and space for conversations between the design team and the public. Participants could access initial findings, surveys, polls, and a virtual charrette hub, as well as join live meetings throughout the December 2020 charrette week. A charrette is a collaborative planning process that involves a group of stakeholders working together to develop ideas. Online charrette week included presentations, small group discussions, and open design studios. The resulting first public draft of this plan was released in June 2022, and was an accumulation of concepts that came out of the public process. The City continued to meet with stakeholders and perform a fiscal analysis of the plan to create the long-term vision for Assembly Square now found in this report.

Dream Big
and
Fight Hard

Interactive Online Activities

- SomerVoice & Somerville By Design Websites
- Virtual Charrette Hub
- Online Polls
- Virtual Tour
- Residential Survey
- Community Survey
- Community Image Survey
- Questionnaires
- YouTube Films
- Preliminary Scenarios

Virtual Charrette Events

November 30, 2020

Kick-Off Presentations

Small Group Discussions

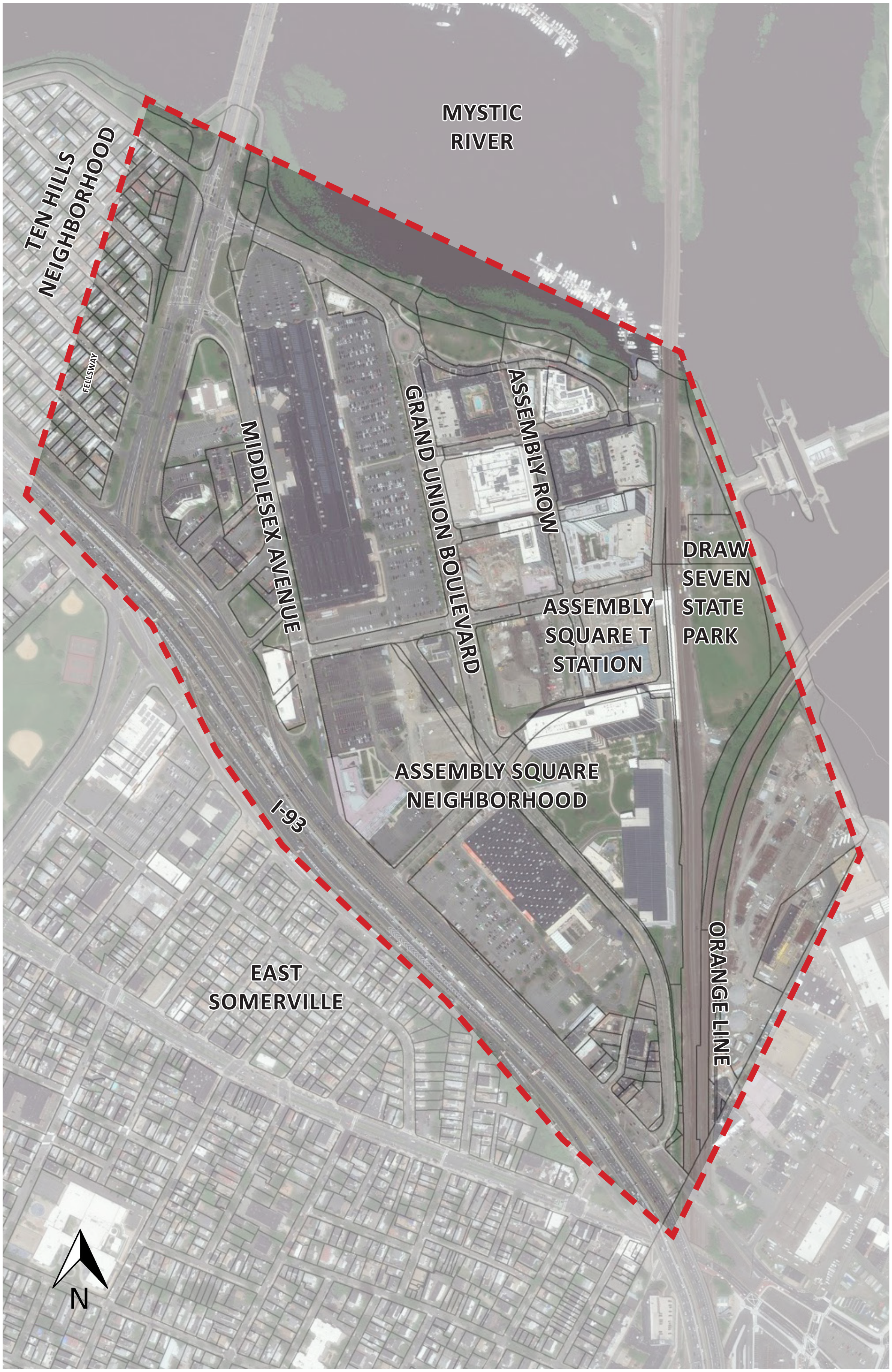
December 1- 3, 2020

Technical Meetings

Open Design Studio

December 4, 2020

Work-in-Progress Presentation

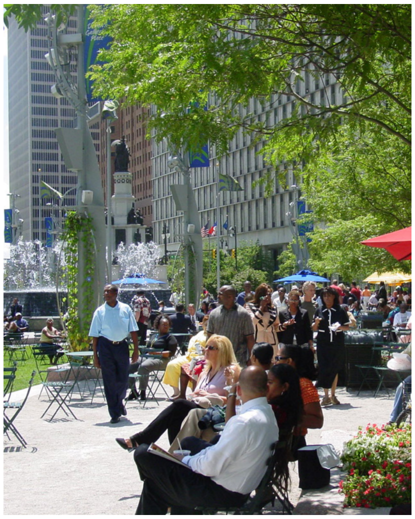

MYSTIC RIVER
TEN HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD
FELLSWAY
MIDDLESEX AVENUE
GRAND UNION BOULEVARD
ASSEMBLY ROW
DRAW SEVEN STATE PARK
ASSEMBLY SQUARE T STATION
ASSEMBLY SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD
I-93
ORANGE LINE
EAST SOMERVILLE
N

5 BIG IDEAS

1

BUILD GREAT NEW PLACES (THAT ARE COMPATIBLE WITH AND RESPECTFUL OF EXISTING SPACES)

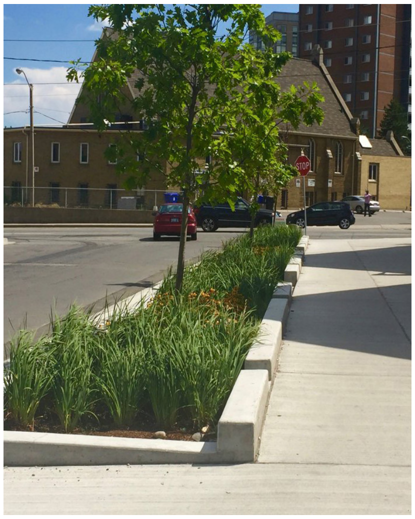
Participants want to see buildings and streets brought together as a cohesive space that everyone can enjoy. That means designing blocks that are more walkable. It means human-scaled buildings should front the public realm while still accommodating large-footprint buildings like life science complexes. And it means properly proportioned public spaces, like streets and greens, that feel like inviting outdoor rooms that are open and available to all.



2

INCREASE ACCESS TO NATURE AND BUILD SUSTAINABLY

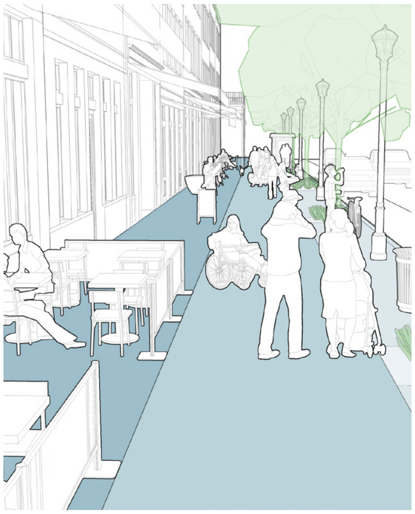
Sustainability means using resources wisely so that there are enough for everyone, both now and in the future, and was a common theme during the public discourse. Participants asked planners to explore district-wide energy goals, improve air and water quality, and to build new structures in an environmentally friendly way (e.g., constructing taller buildings by the highway to block pollution). Many people cheered the creation of high-quality parks and public spaces throughout Assembly Square and a trail network that connects these spaces and celebrates the Mystic River.



3

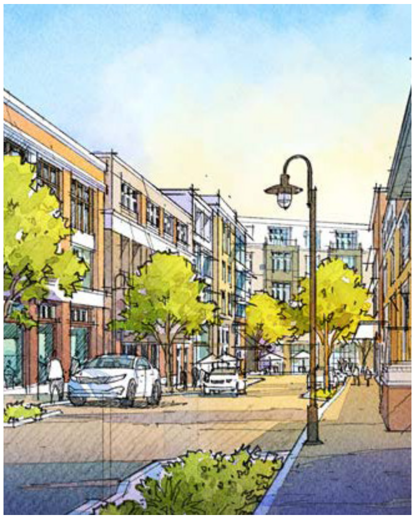
DEMAND SAFE, COMFORTABLE, AND INTERESTING STREETS AND INCREASED TRANSIT AVAILABILITY

Participants recognized that Assembly Square needs to increase transit, cycling, and walking options to better connect with the surrounding city including connections to East Somerville and Foss Park. That will mean balanced street spaces to provide a mix of mobility and placemaking, and boosting transit access with decreased MBTA Orange Line wait times and additional bus routes. For pedestrians, it will mean well-planned sidewalk zones and four-way crosswalks should be added at intersections and a clearly defined ring of infrastructure for cyclists.



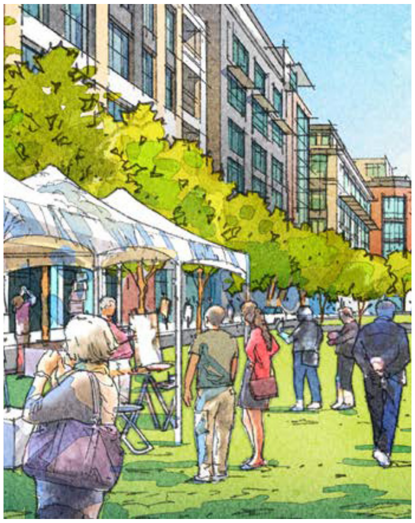
4 GROW REVENUE-GENERATING USES FOR SOMERVILLE

The community wants to add more businesses to the city to make the tax base more varied. It can be done practically, by enhancing the site's current strengths, such as the Mystic River, Draw Seven State Park, the MBTA Orange Line, and the area's strong business cluster. It can be done smartly, by working with entrepreneurs and developers to encourage commercial growth, and by challenging innovators to cultivate inventive new businesses.



5 CULTIVATE THE ASSEMBLY COMMUNITY & RECONNECT PHYSICALLY AND SOCIALLY TO THE BROADER CITY

There are many ways a neighborhood can better connect itself to the surrounding areas. Physically: remove obstacles, add transit options, and make Fellsway, Kensington Connector, and the river more crossable. Socially: foster business improvement districts, main street associations, and neighborhood groups. Spiritually and psychologically: develop a meaningful identity for Assembly Square that is deeper than just "Assembly Row." These can be addressed by expanding the residential population and making space for small, local, independent businesses.

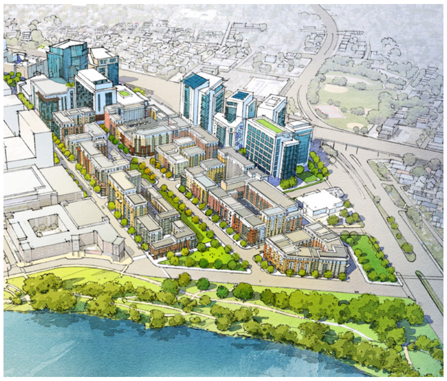


THE PLAN

1

ASSEMBLY MARKETPLACE

The Assembly Marketplace site provides an opportunity to extend the Assembly Square neighborhood's mixed-use residential character across Grand Union Boulevard. Interconnected streets can create a network of walkable blocks with civic spaces at the heart of the neighborhood. It provides the opportunity to create the Assembly Square that the entire neighborhood centers around. Mid-size buildings at the center of the site can transition to taller buildings along Grand Union Boulevard and Middlesex Avenue. In addition, Grand Union Boulevard could be shifted south between the roundabout and Fellsway, expanding the riverfront park.



2

MIDDLESEX CORRIDOR

Middlesex Avenue is located in the western portion of the Assembly Square neighborhood and serves as a critical connection between Fellsway and Mystic Avenue. Because Middlesex Avenue lies next to the elevated Interstate-93 viaduct, taller buildings in this area can create a physical barrier between the highway and the rest of the neighborhood. This makes the location ideal for life science and workplace uses. Middlesex Avenue is also home to the courthouse, which can be expanded. The avenue can serve as a main connection accommodating motor vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians.

3

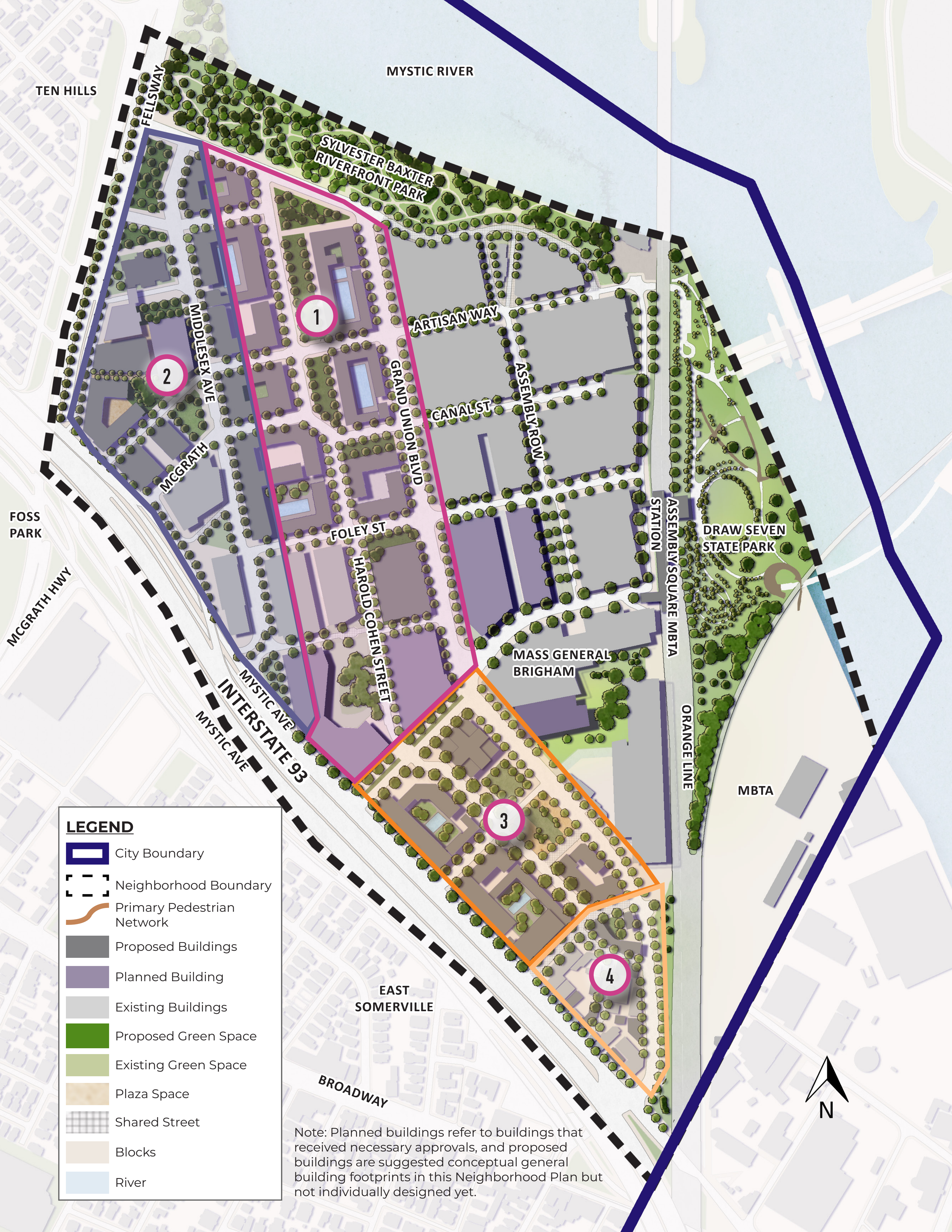
ASSEMBLY SQUARE SOUTH

Currently, the Assembly Square South area features aging, suburban, car-oriented retail. Some sites are vacant, while others are occupied by prospering businesses. In the long term, there is an opportunity to redevelop underused parcels visible from I-93 for office use, and parcels closer to Grand Union Boulevard for a large civic building and civic space as well as residential uses. The plan could give a dense urban edge to the Assembly Point micro-district. Overall, uses should be diversified to serve a full range of daily needs and increase vitality. Over time, parcels like the Assembly Square South site can be redeveloped as well.

4

ASSEMBLY POINT MICRO-DISTRICT

The southern portion of Assembly Square has multiple property owners and a visibly different character from the rest of the site. Existing buildings are small and mostly occupied by makers and smaller businesses. This area can become a vibrant micro-district for arts and crafts, maker spaces, and local restaurants. Shared streets that prioritize pedestrians, combined with new and refurbished buildings can create a lively area with an identity all its own.


MYSTIC RIVER
TEN HILLS
FELLSWAY
SYLVESTER BAXTER RIVERFRONT PARK
1
2
ARTISAN WAY
MIDDLESEX AVE
GRAND UNION BLVD
ASSEMBLY ROW
CANAL ST
MCGRATH
FOLEY ST
HAROLD COHEN STREET
STATION
ASSEMBLY SQUARE MBTA
DRAW SEVEN STATE PARK
FOSS PARK
MCGRATH HWY
MASS GENERAL BRIGHAM
MYSTIC AVE
INTERSTATE 93
MYSTIC AVE
ORANGE LINE
3
MBTA
4
EAST SOMERVILLE
BROADWAY
N
LEGEND
City Boundary
Neighborhood Boundary
Primary Pedestrian Network
Proposed Buildings
Planned Building
Existing Buildings
Proposed Green Space
Existing Green Space
Plaza Space
Shared Street
Blocks
River

Note: Planned buildings refer to buildings that received necessary approvals, and proposed buildings are suggested conceptual general building footprints in this Neighborhood Plan but not individually designed yet.

MOBILITY

AREAS OF PRIORITY

The design team identified eleven areas of priority within the Assembly Square neighborhood that demonstrate how changes in right-of-way can provide greater options for people walking, cycling, and taking transit. The focus of these proposals is to:

1. Ensure that current and future streets within Assembly Square allocate more space for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders.
2. Address the barriers to greater connectivity between Assembly Square and the surrounding neighborhoods.
3. Create a connection across the Mystic River to the growing residential, shopping, entertainment, and fermentation districts of Everett.

STREET NETWORK

Our guiding philosophy is to prioritize pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users while focusing single occupancy motor vehicle use on the perimeter of the site. The following mobility principles should be considered:

1. Create a compact and walkable street network that connects with existing streets and adjacent neighborhoods to the south and west.
2. Promote the design of mixed-use streets that encourage multimodal activity.
3. Provide safer routes and lighting for residents and visitors traveling by foot, bicycle, transit, or car including coming from East Somerville.

MODE SPLIT

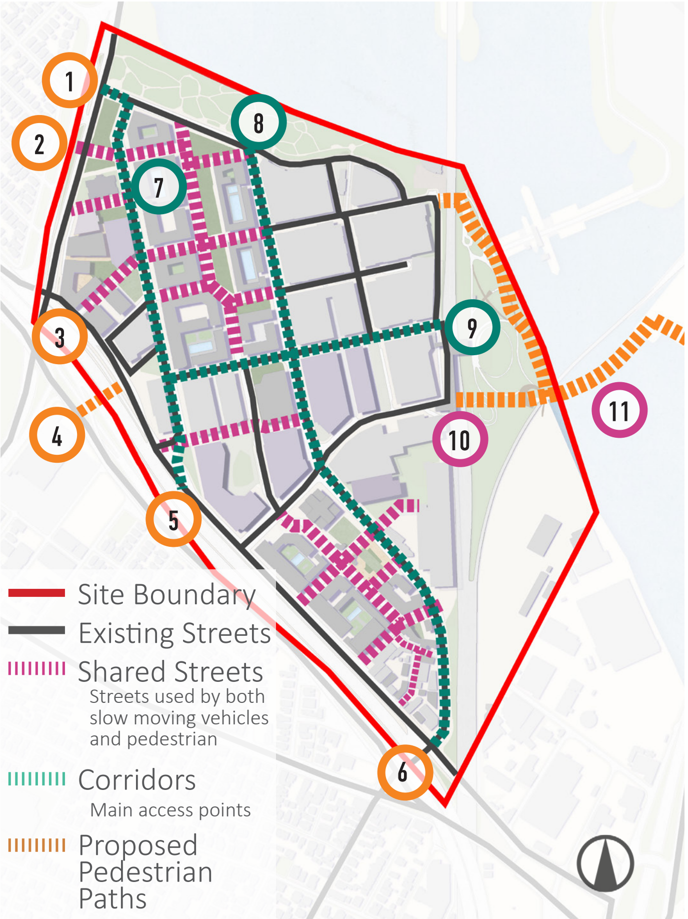
Currently, more than 50% of trips to, from, and within the Assembly Square neighborhood are made by car. The goal is to reduce that number by half, so 75% of trips would not involve a single-occupancy motor vehicle. By limiting parking, increasing transit options, and designing multimodal streets, the City can shift the dominant transportation mode.

Increased Transit

Frequency of the MBTA Orange Line should be increased at Assembly Square. Multiple additional bus options can connect Assembly Square to Porter and Union Squares, including the City's new MBTA Green Line extension stops.

Transportation Demand Management

The Assembly Connect program helps manage transportation demand for the neighborhood. New local business users should be encouraged to participate by providing employees with transit passes and discouraging parking on site.



AREAS OF PRIORITY

Gateways

① Grand Union Boulevard (North) Gateway
② Middlesex Avenue (North) Gateway
③ Fellsway/Mystic Avenue Gateway
④ Kensington Connector Gateway
⑤ Middlesex Avenue (South) Gateway
⑥ Lombardi Street Gateway

Corridors

⑦ Middlesex Avenue Corridor Street Section
⑧ Grand Union Boulevard Corridor Street Section
⑨ Foley Street Corridor Street Section

Access

⑩ New access to Draw Seven Park from the MBTA station
⑪ Pedestrian bridge connection to Everett

ECONOMICS

1

Enhance the site's current strengths.

Assembly Square has a strong business cluster. The proof is in its key research and laboratory anchor tenants, its well established retail base, and its growing residential footprint. Now it's time to broaden the neighborhood's economic, commercial, and office offerings through coordinated branding. The goal is to attract diverse but complementary businesses of all sizes and types.

2

Expand greenspace, mixed-use components, and a family-friendly approach.

Assembly Square is home to much of Somerville's shoreline. This river's edge has potential to become an even more vibrant waterfront park to delight locals and draw regional visitors. Priority actions include expanding the width of the waterfront park, new programming, a connected loop of large civic spaces throughout the neighborhood, and inventive resiliency projects that enhance recreation opportunities. A central square can serve as the heart of the community upon which workforce housing and an expanded variety of housing types may be available.

3

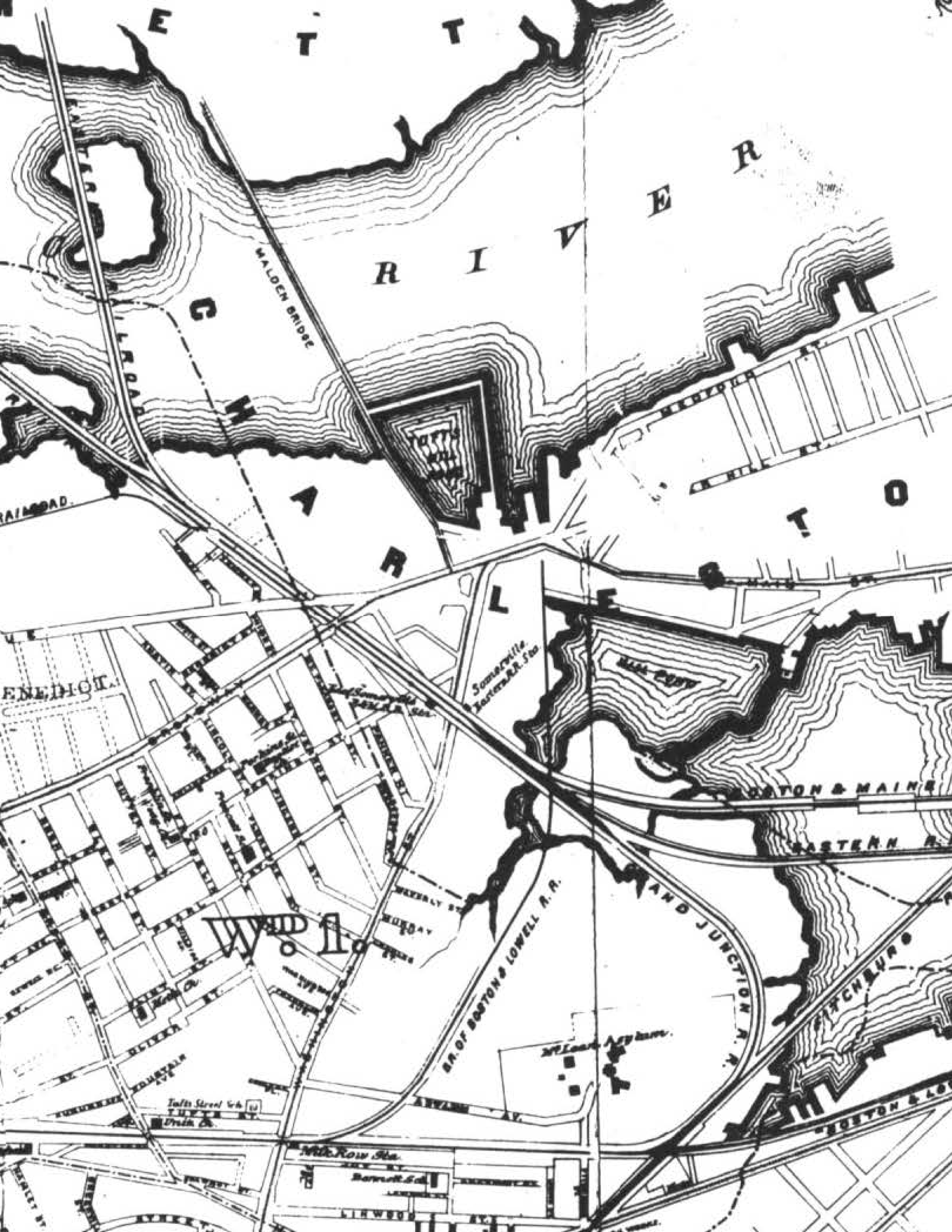
Develop new catalytic niches that complement the commercial footprint.

While commercial space is key to tax revenues, balancing the neighborhood requires more "soft-power" investments. These will help bring additional life and overall gains to the economy by increasing the civic opportunities within the neighborhood for both residents and visitors. This could include attracting education resources, creating small-footprint markets, and increasing corporate social responsibility program investments. Micro businesses should be encouraged with affordable rental spaces to support local businesses and startups.

Fiscal Analysis

A fiscal analysis was performed to ensure proposed development is fiscally reponsible for the city and will not burden existing residents.

BRITAIN, EUROPE, US
BRITAIN
BRITAIN



M E T T
R I V E R
C H A R L E S T O
MALDEN BRIDGE
RAILROAD
RAILROAD
ENEDICT
Somerville Eastern R.R. Sta.
BOSTON & MAINE
EASTERN R.R.
GRAND JUNCTION R.R.
BR. OF BOSTON & LOWELL R.R.
FITCHBURG
BOSTON & LO
WAVERLY ST.
MURRAY
Wd. 1
McLean Asylum
Tufts Street Sch.
TUFTS ST.
ADAMS AV.
Milk Row Sta.
Barnett & Co.
LINWOOD ST.

1. Background

Assembly Square is a unique Somerville neighborhood with a great potential for future growth. This chapter lays out what Assembly Square is today and some of the forces shaping its future. The “we” in this document refers to the City, the residents, and the design team as a unit.

ASSEMBLY SQUARE VISIONS

ASSEMBLY SQUARE HISTORY

Somerville is composed of vibrant, compact, and connected neighborhoods which are physically and socially distinct. When it came time to develop the last neighborhood of this great city, Assembly Square, anti-urban, suburban forces pushed for a single-use commercial pod of big-box retailers and parking lots. Somerville pushed back. The City wanted to see Assembly Square become a neighborhood as mixed in uses, diverse in people, unique in character, and rich in social, recreational, and economic opportunity as any in the region.

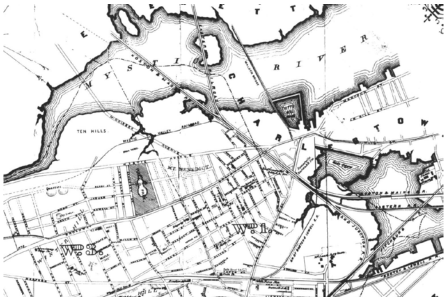
Assembly Square is surrounded by the historic neighborhoods of Somerville. It's just 2.5 miles northwest of Downtown Boston but is separated from the rest of the city by Interstate 93 (I-93) and the Mystic River.

The roughly 150-acre site was once home to a Ford Motor Company assembly plant, which gave this neighborhood its name. The plant closed in 1958, and in 1979, Somerville declared the Assembly Square district to be blighted. The City adopted the Assembly Square Revitalization Plan, and the former auto plant became Assembly Square Mall. This 360,000- square-foot shopping center featured a Kmart, a Jordan Marsh, smaller retail stores, and a food court.

Large retailers offer tax benefits to the City, but most areas in Somerville are unfavorable for such developments. Assembly Square's site conditions proved ideal, however. A big-box Home Depot opened southwest of the mall in 1992. In 1999, IKEA purchased two waterfront industrial sites, potentially adding another behemoth retailer. Extra parking was required because Assembly Square is a heavily trafficked regional center framed by highways. The area was becoming a suburban district in the heart of the region's most densely populated city.

But the residents of Somerville had other plans. In 1998, the Mystic View Task Force, a group of residents, created a bold, new vision for Assembly Square. The Task Force wanted to see a lively, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use development. The City of Somerville initiated an extensive planning process that produced the 2000 Planning Study for Assembly Square. The plan proposed a 24-hour mixed-use district with residential, retail, office, and recreational space as well as cinemas, restaurants, and hotels. Assembly Square was rezoned to promote the mixed-use concept and design guidelines, and a design review committee was created to further the resident vision.

In 2005, Federal Realty Investment Trust (FRIT), a Maryland-based real estate investment trust and developer, purchased the ailing Assembly Square Mall. In 2006, Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone worked with


Mystic River and East Somerville in 1870

Ford
BUILT AT SOMERVILLE
Ford assembly plant

Old Ford assembly plant, now Assembly Square Marketplace

Aerial view of Assembly Row

IKEA to swap its centrally located waterfront parcel with an internal parcel to allow FRIT to create a waterfront mixed-use development. With the addition of a hard-won and highly prized Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) Orange Line station in 2012 and the construction of Assembly Row and Mass General Brigham, the outlook for this neighborhood drastically improved.

ASSEMBLY SQUARE TODAY

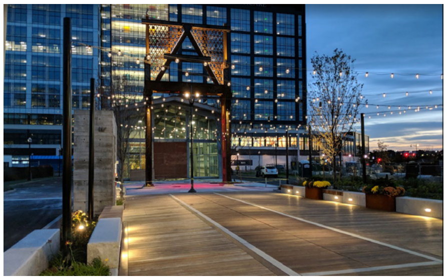
In 2020, after 20 years of working to achieve the people's vision, the City of Somerville commissioned a team led by Dover, Kohl & Partners to update the 2000 Planning Study and plan Assembly Square's ultimate state as a walkable, attractive, livable, and sustainable part of Somerville's fabric. A real neighborhood, in other words. To make that happen, we first had to have a conversation about what it meant to be "a real neighborhood" — and take inventory of what the area had become..

After decades of urban planning wins and losses, Assembly Square had morphed into a curious mix of big-box retail stores and fields of parking lots abutting Assembly Row's mixed-use main street with its more attractive shopfronts, tree-lined sidewalks, and enviable, award-winning urbanism.

Assembly Square has housing, but the units are largely rented by single occupants who only live in them during the workweek. Many of these residents gave up their Assembly Square apartments when COVID-19 hit, returning full time to their homes elsewhere on Massachusetts' North Shore or in the historic towns in the western part of the state.

Unlike other neighborhoods in Somerville, Assembly Square does not have a focused business association, main street association, neighborhood association or homeowner's association. The Assembly Square Advisory Committee functions as a business and neighborhood association. Even the landmark artworks featured in Assembly Square, such as the three gateways made of iron I-beams, recall the site's industrial past, feeling like corporate art rather than local art. "If you've ever wanted to live in shopping a mall, then you're in luck," wrote The Boston Globe.

Assembly Square lacks a soul. What will it take to make the area one of the Somerville's great neighborhoods?



Caffè Nero in Assembly Row

Assembly Row streetscape

Amphitheater at Baxter Park

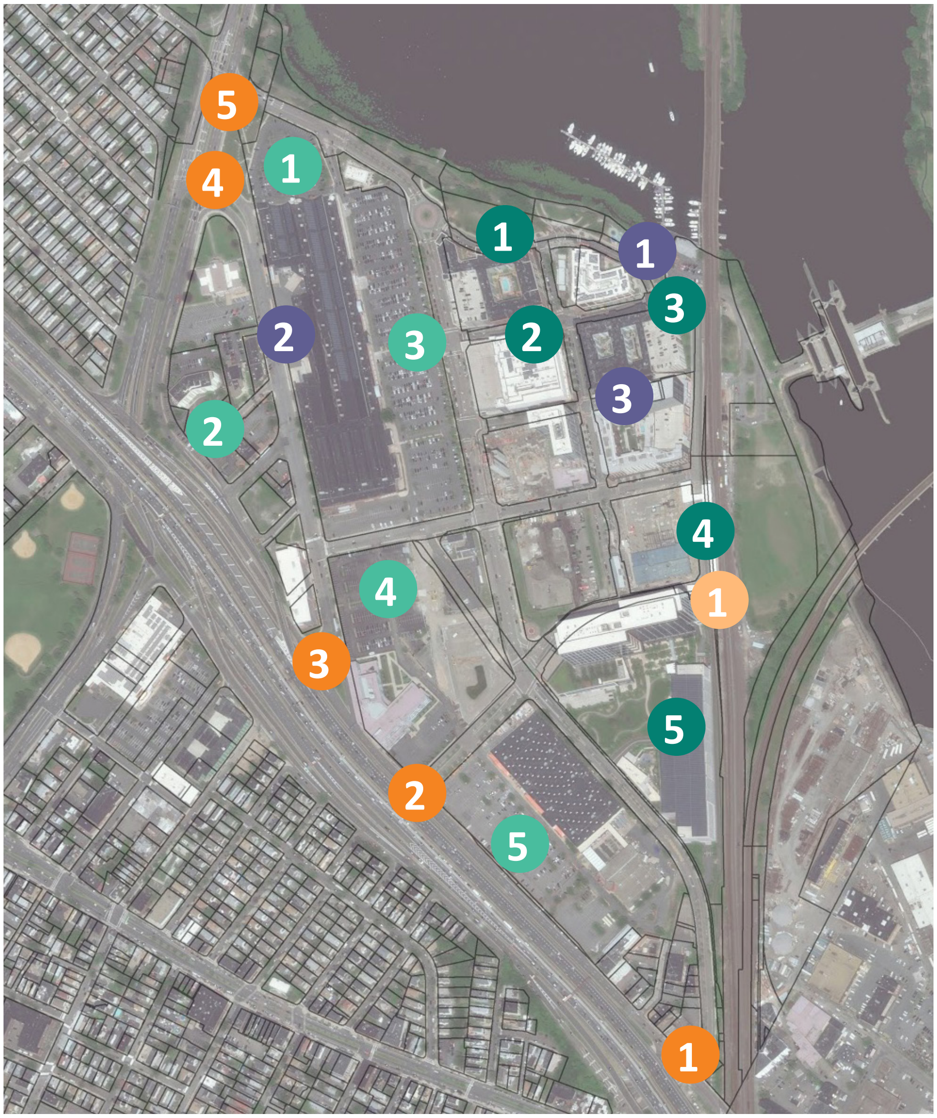
Public space at Assembly Row

EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

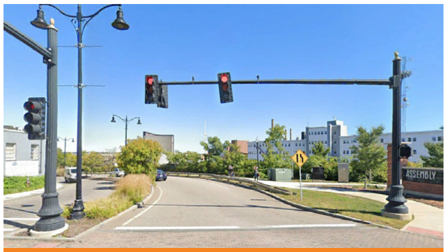
EXISTING MOBILITY CONDITIONS

The following images represent key locations within Assembly Square for mobility and what it looks like to get around the neighborhood. Because the dominant form of transportation today is automobiles, this looks at parking garages and lots, but shows the new BlueBikes as a point to the future of micro-mobility within Assembly Square. Existing retail and commercial requires unsightly loading and services especially along Middlesex Ave.

The planning for transportation should be community centered. Connection to adjacent communities should be safe and convenient. There is currently limited safe pedestrian access from Assembly Square to neighborhoods such as East Somerville and Ten Hills. The transportation planning should focus on the needs of the community and develop a people-based transportation process.

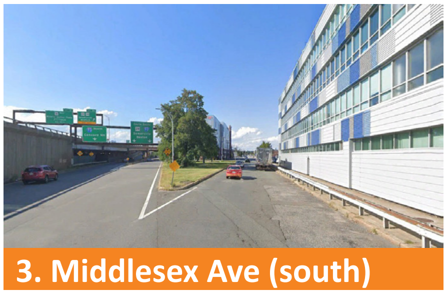


Access Points

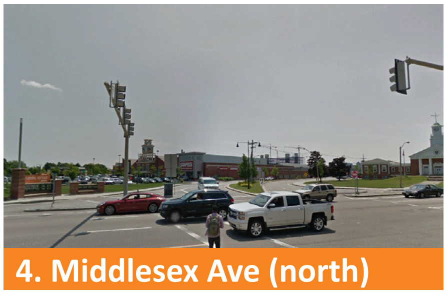


1. Grand Union Blvd (south)

2. Revolution Dr



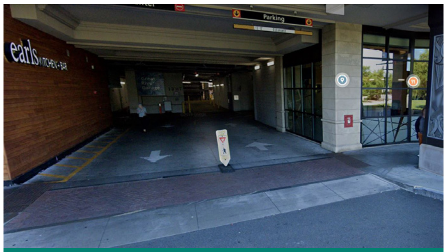
3. Middlesex Ave (south)



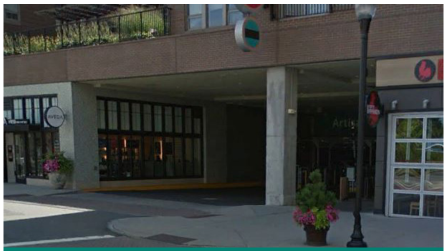
4. Middlesex Ave (north)

5. Grand Union Blvd (north)

Parking Garages


1. Great River Garage

2. Artisan West Garage


3. Artisan East Garage

4. Canal Garage

5. Mass Gen Brigham Garage

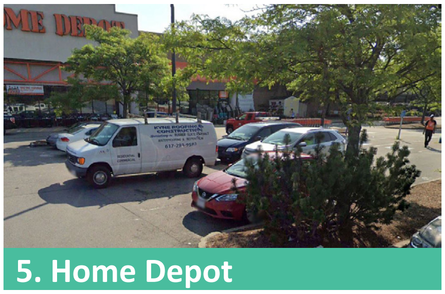
Parking Lots

1. Christmas Tree Shop

2. Middlesex Ave

3. Marketplace

4. 5 Middlesex


5. Home Depot

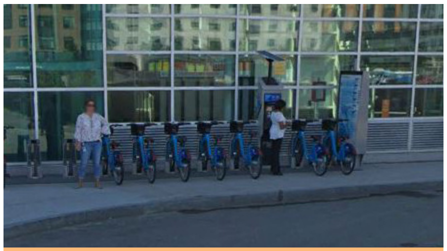
Loading/Service

1. Artisan Way

2. Middlesex Ave

3. Canal St

Micromobility


1. BlueBikes

IMPORTANT TRENDS

POPULATION TRENDS

Somerville is anticipated to grow. The latest Metropolitan Area Planning Council projection shows a 15% population increase between 2017 and 2030. Many new residents are moving to Somerville, especially young professionals. The city's population rose 7% from 2010 to 2017. The number of residents aged 25–34 increased by approximately 1/3 of Somerville's entire population. However, the number of residents aged 18 and under has dropped almost 20%, and overall, Somerville's population has seen a high turnover rate. Assembly Square should be encouraged to create a range of housing sizes and types to allow more people to potentially relocate within Somerville as their households and housing needs change.

HOUSING TRENDS

In addition to its robust community life, Somerville's close proximity to the schools and industries of Boston makes the city a highly desirable destination. The population increase between 2017 and 2030 corresponds to approximately 5,500 new housing units that must be built just to satisfy the new growth.

The SomerVision 2040 plan identifies six main housing-related challenges facing the city: the rising cost of housing, the lack of affordable housing, forced displacement, chronic homelessness, an insufficient diversity of housing stock, and an inadequate condition of the existing housing stock. Only about 10% of units in Somerville are currently deed-restricted affordable. For comparison, Boston has 19% and Cambridge has about 15%. The minimum requirement for inclusionary housing was raised to 20% after SomerVision 2040 and the amended zoning. As new housing is built in Assembly Square, it is required to have 20% of the units affordable, which will help to increase the overall supply.

MOBILITY

The density of urban development in Somerville facilitates efficient mobility among neighborhoods. However, Assembly Square is cut off from other neighborhoods due to I-93, Fellsway, the Orange Line, and the Mystic River. The Orange Line stop and bus route 90 help to connect Assembly Square

15%

Growth in
POPULATION by 2030

44%

24-44 YEAR OLD
HOUSEHOLDS
GROWTH

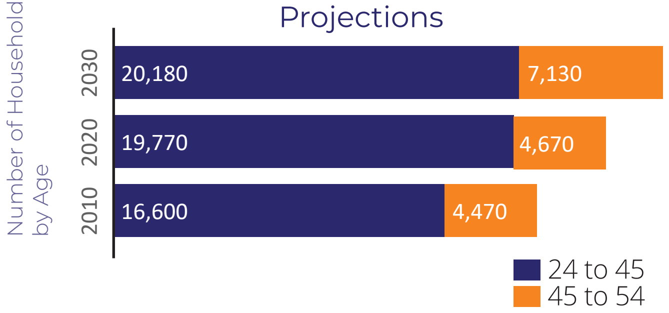
74%
66%

PORTION OF
COST BURDENED
LOW INCOME
POPULATION

59%

45-54 YEAR OLD
HOUSEHOLDS
GROWTH

Housing Demand Increase 2010-2030 Projections



17%

MODERATE
-INCOME

~2/3 OF THE
POPULATION ARE
RENTERS

35-40%

LOW-INCOME

Source: Sustainable neighborhoods working group recommendations report December 2015

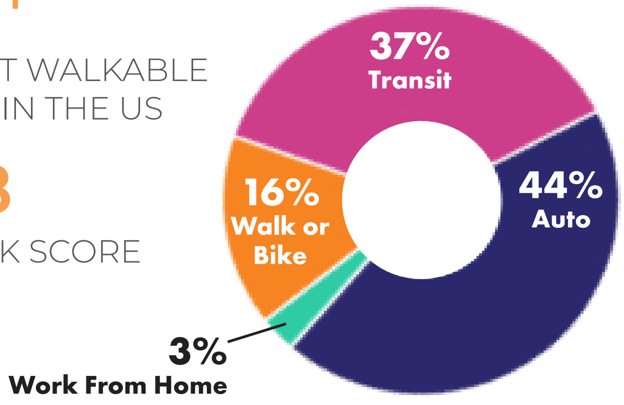
7TH

MOST WALKABLE
CITY IN THE US

88

WALK SCORE

How People Get to Work*



Note: 2015 Data, Pre-COVID

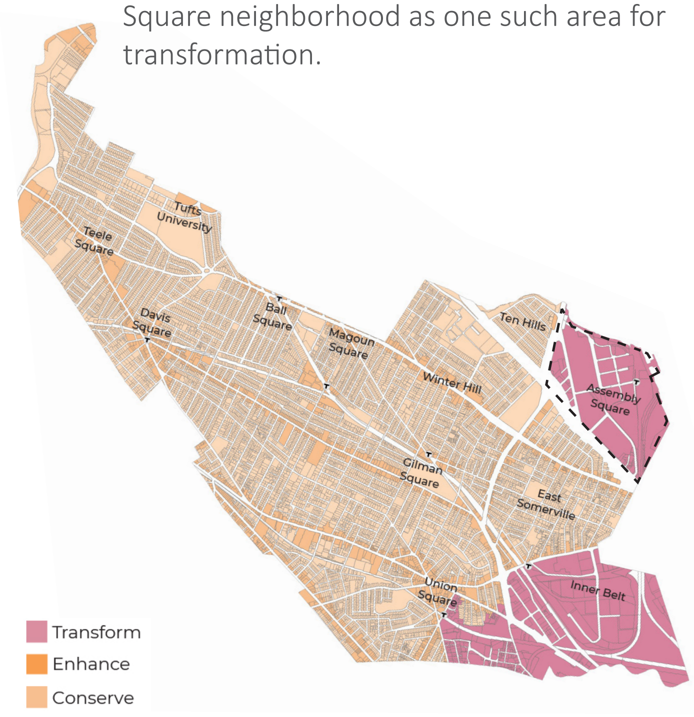
CITY ANALYSIS MAPS

The following maps present a snapshot of the regional and citywide existing conditions as well as broad initiatives that affect Assembly Square. These analysis maps provide an in-depth look to illuminate the dynamics of the neighborhood. Key takeaways for each of these maps are summarized below by topic.

The City and Site Analysis maps were created in December 2020 and there have not been any major changes since then.

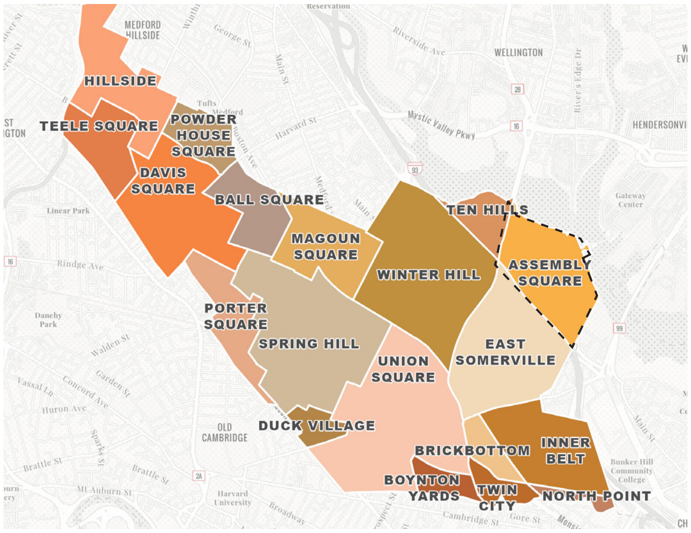
SOMERVISION PLAN

SomerVision 2040 is an update to the City of Somerville's comprehensive plan. The original plan was created nearly 10 years ago, and the update checks in on the progress made to date and extends the planning horizon an additional 10 years into the future. SomerVision 2040 sets the overall vision and framework for the city as a whole and identifies areas for transformation, enhancement, and conservation. Plans for individual neighborhoods and new MBTA station areas then take a closer look at specific areas for development within the city. SomerVision 2040 identifies the Assembly Square neighborhood as one such area for transformation.


Tufts University
Teele Square
Davis Square
Ball Square
Magoun Square
Ten Hills
Winter Hill
Assembly Square
Gilman Square
East Somerville
Union Square
Inner Belt
Transform
Enhance
Conserve

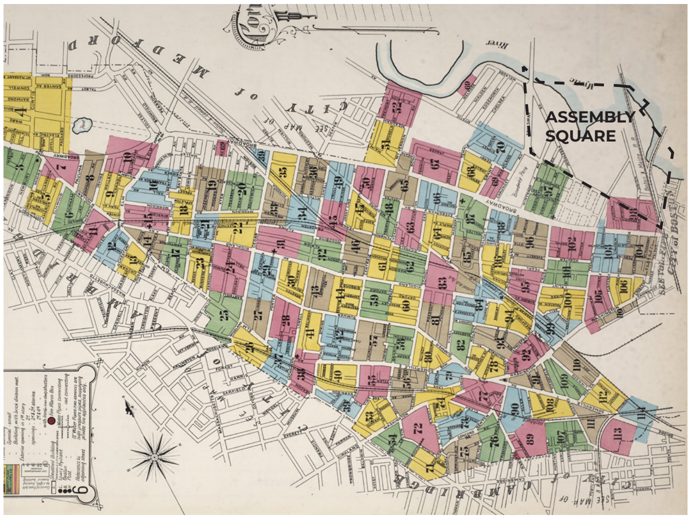
CITY OF NEIGHBORHOODS

Somerville is a series of neighborhoods, each with their own identity. The neighborhoods are then divided into seven wards with Assembly Square being located within Ward 1. Assembly Square is the newest neighborhood in the city, previously being an industrial and commercial area. The riverfront park and retail shops are attracting more people to Assembly Square to both visit and live.


MEDFORD HILLSIDE
HILLSIDE
TEELE SQUARE
POWDER HOUSE SQUARE
DAVIS SQUARE
BALL SQUARE
TEN HILLS
MAGOUN SQUARE
WINTER HILL
ASSEMBLY SQUARE
PORTER SQUARE
SPRING HILL
UNION SQUARE
EAST SOMERVILLE
DUCK VILLAGE
OLD CAMBRIDGE
BRICKBOTTOM
INNER BELT
BOYNTON YARDS
TWIN CITY
NORTH POINT
WELLINGTON
HENDERSONVI
Mystic Valley Pkwy
Harvard University
Bunker Hill Community College
Gateway Center
Linear Park
Danehy Park

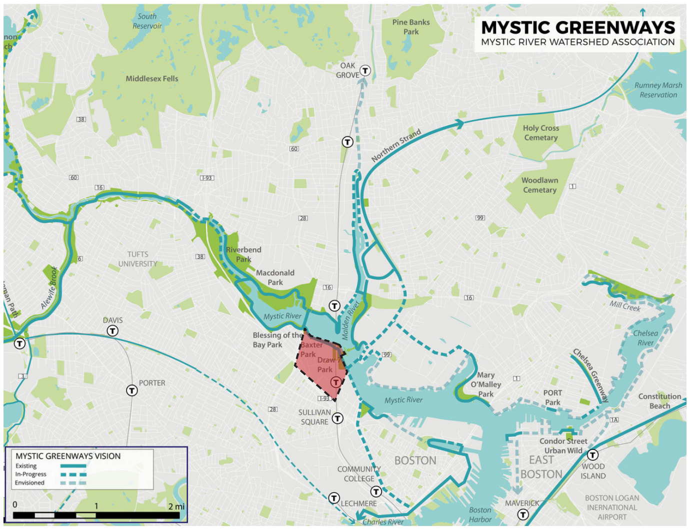
1900 SANBORN MAP

This Sanborn Map for Somerville was created in 1900 by Sanborn Map Company. The historical street network is mostly preserved in the current street pattern. The site of Assembly Square was undeveloped when the map was first published. The map also shows the historical course of the Mystic River. A significant portion of the current Assembly Square land was obtained through reclamation.


ASSEMBLY SQUARE

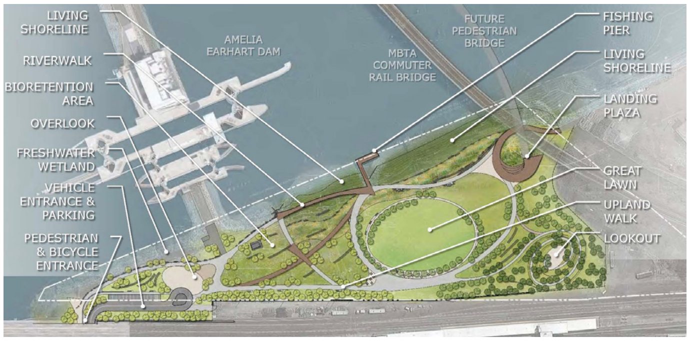
MYSTIC GREENWAYS

The Mystic Greenway Initiative will connect 25 miles of trails. The plan can improve numerous parks and engage community members from Mystic Lake to Boston Harbor. The greenway runs through the Assembly Square site and will enhance its connection to adjacent neighborhoods.


MYSTIC GREENWAYS
MYSTIC RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION
South Reservoir
Middlesex Fells
Pine Banks Park
OAK GROVE
Rumney Marsh Reservation
Holy Cross Cemetery
Northern Strand
Woodlawn Cemetery
TUFTS UNIVERSITY
Riverbend Park
Macdonald Park
Alewife Brook
Mystic River
Malden River
Mill Creek
Chelsea River
DAVIS
Blessing of the Bay Park
Baxter Park
Draw Park
PORTER
SULLIVAN SQUARE
Mary O'Malley Park
PORT Park
Chelsea Greenway
Constitution Beach
Condor Street Urban Wild
EAST BOSTON
WOOD ISLAND
BOSTON
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
LECHMERE
Charles River
Boston Harbor
MAVERICK
BOSTON LOGAN INERNATIONAL AIRPORT
MYSTIC GREENWAYS VISION
Existing
In-Progress
Envisioned
0
1
2 mi

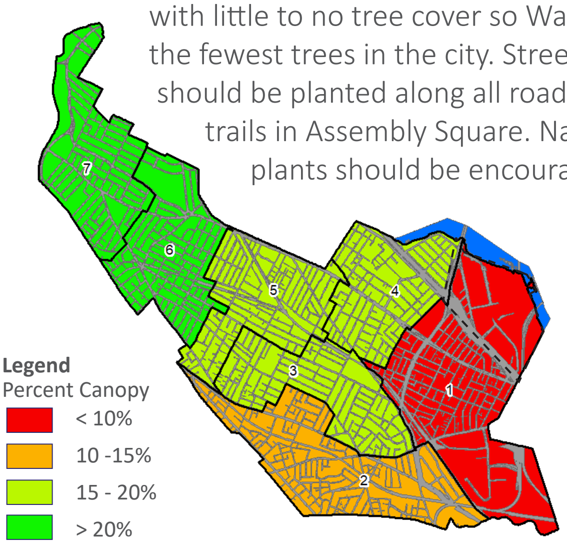
DRAW SEVEN STATE PARK

Draw Seven is a State-owned waterfront park. The park features an amphitheater, child's playground and views of the Mystic River. To help remedy the currently underutilization, a renovation effort by the Department of Conservation and Recreation is underway with plans to create a series of new pathways and gathering spaces. The project will restore ecological habitats and incorporate freshwater wetland and saltwater living shoreline. The proposed topography can accommodate anticipated sea level rise and storm events.

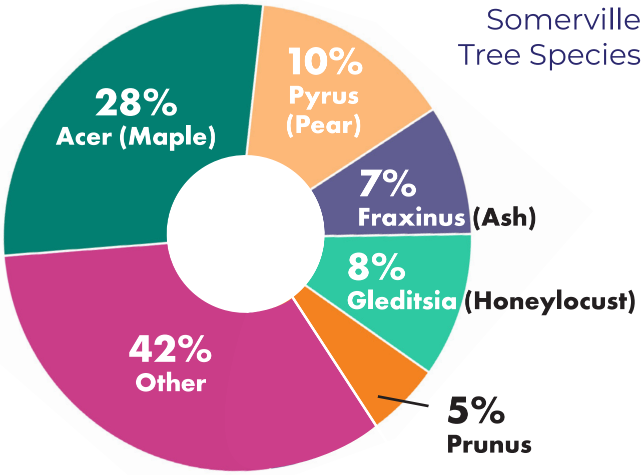

LIVING SHORELINE
RIVERWALK
BIORETENTION AREA
OVERLOOK
FRESHWATER WETLAND
VEHICLE ENTRANCE & PARKING
PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLE ENTRANCE
AMELIA EARHART DAM
MBTA COMMUTER RAIL BRIDGE
FUTURE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
FISHING PIER
LIVING SHORELINE
LANDING PLAZA
GREAT LAWN
UPLAND WALK
LOOKOUT

URBAN FORESTRY

Somerville has been a Tree City USA community for 29 years and boasts a tree canopy covering 14.6% of the city. The tree ordinance maintains a proper budget for tree-related expenses, and proudly commits to celebrating Arbor Day. Assembly Square consists of industrial or previously industrial lands with little to no tree cover so Ward 1 has the fewest trees in the city. Streets trees should be planted along all roads and trails in Assembly Square. Native plants should be encouraged.


7
6
5
4
3
1
2
Legend
Percent Canopy
🟥 < 10%
🟧 10 -15%
🟨 15 - 20%
🟩 > 20%

Somerville 2018 Canopy By Ward



14.6%
TREE CANOPY COVER

13,604
TOTAL PUBLIC TREES

77.6%
IMPERVIOUS SURFACE

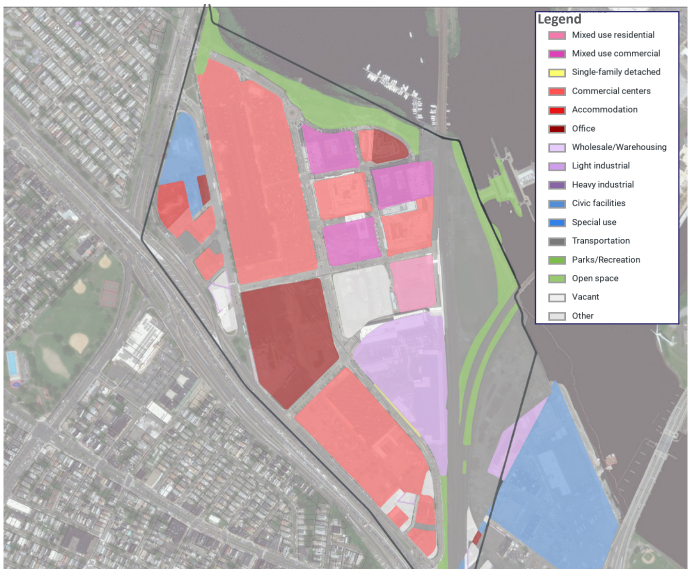
$1,047,466
ANNUAL BENEFITS OF STREET TREES

Source: Urban Forest Management Plan

SITE ANALYSIS MAPS

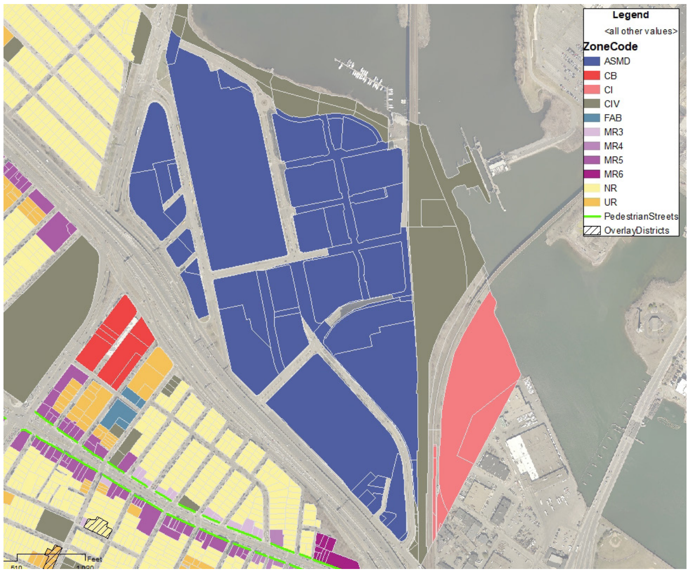
CURRENT LAND USE PLAN

Commercial office space accounts for the dominant land uses in Assembly Square. Some of the parcels east of Grand Union Boulevard fall in the mixed-use commercial and mixed-use residential categories. The Somerville District Court is designated as civic.


Legend
Mixed use residential
Mixed use commercial
Single-family detached
Commercial centers
Accommodation
Office
Wholesale/Warehousing
Light industrial
Heavy industrial
Civic facilities
Special use
Transportation
Parks/Recreation
Open space
Vacant
Other

ZONING

The Assembly Square Mixed Use District is a special district intended to implement previous Assembly Square planning through the redevelopment of Assembly Row in close walking distance of the new MBTA orange line stations.


Legend
<all other values>
ZoneCode
ASMD
CB
CI
CIV
FAB
MR3
MR4
MR5
MR6
NR
UR
PedestrianStreets
OverlayDistricts
Feet

PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

There are several large properties under single ownership that may be divided into multiple blocks. The two areas along I-93 to the north and south end of the site are split among more than a dozen smaller property owners, allowing for the possibility of finer-grained development. The riverfront green spaces are owned by the State and the MBTA.

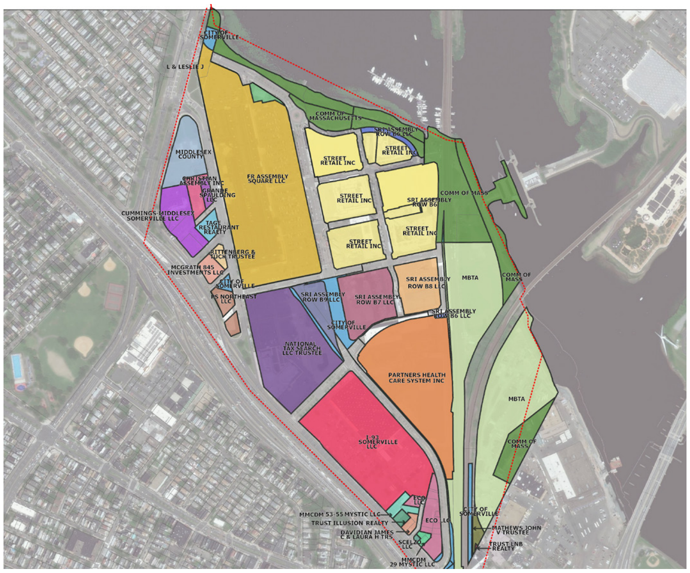
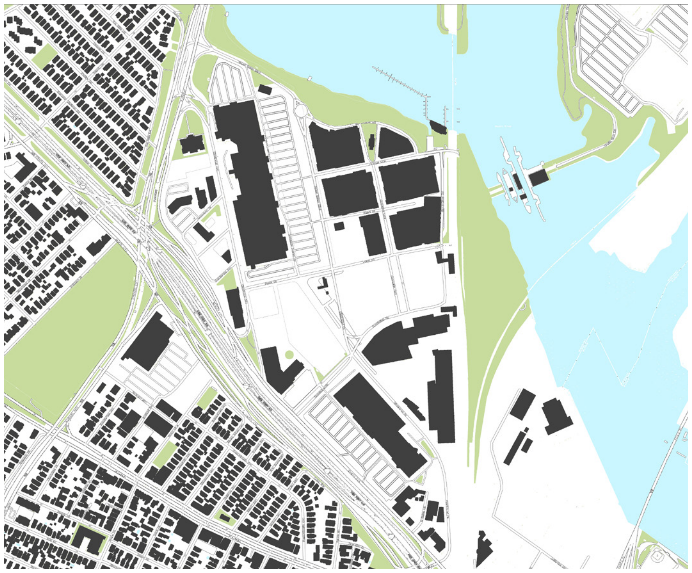

CITY OF SOMERVILLE
L & LESLIE J
COMM OF MASSACHUSETTS
SRI ASSEMBLY ROW B6 LLC
STREET RETAIL INC
STREET RETAIL INC
MIDDLESEX COUNTY
FR ASSEMBLY SQUARE LLC
CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY INC
GRANDE SPAULDING LLC
STREET RETAIL INC
SRI ASSEMBLY ROW B6
COMM OF MASS
CUMMINGS-MIDDLESEX SOMERVILLE LLC
TAGE RESTAURANT REALTY
STREET RETAIL INC
STREET RETAIL INC
RITTENBERG & TUCK TRUSTEE
MCGRATH 845 INVESTMENTS LLC
CITY OF SOMERVILLE
SRI ASSEMBLY ROW B8 LLC
MBTA
COMM OF MASS
PS NORTHEAST LLC
SRI ASSEMBLY ROW B9 LLC
SRI ASSEMBLY ROW B7 LLC
SRI ASSEMBLY ROW B6 LLC
CITY OF SOMERVILLE
NATIONAL TAX SEARCH LLC TRUSTEE
PARTNERS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM INC
MBTA
I-93 SOMERVILLE LLC
COMM OF MASS
ECO LLC
MMCDM 53-55 MYSTIC LLC
TRUST ILLUSION REALTY
ECO LLC
CITY OF SOMERVILLE
DAVIDIAN JAMES C & LAURA H TRS
MATHEWS JOHN V TRUSTEE
SCELZO LLC
TRUST LNB REALTY
MMCDM 29 MYSTIC LLC

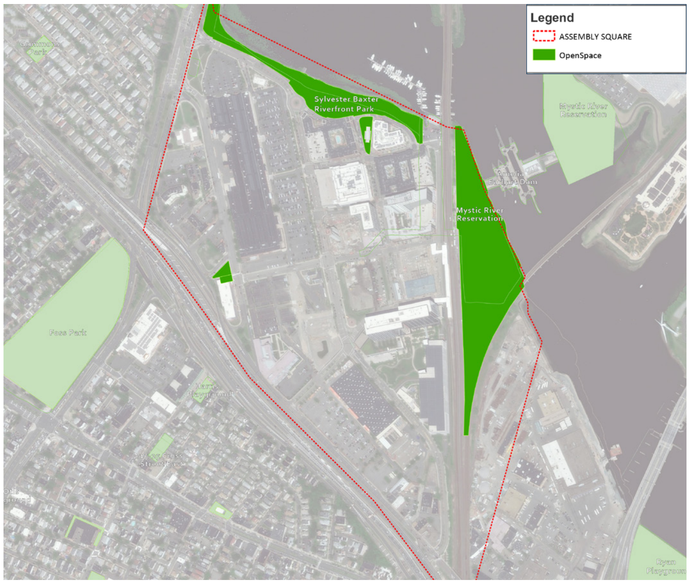
FIGURE-GROUND PLAN

Assembly Square is shaped by I-93 (an elevated interstate), Fellsway/State Route 28 (a six-lane highway), and the MBTA's Orange Line and Haverhill Commuter Rail line, which are all barriers to other neighborhoods. There are vast surface parking areas throughout the neighborhood.



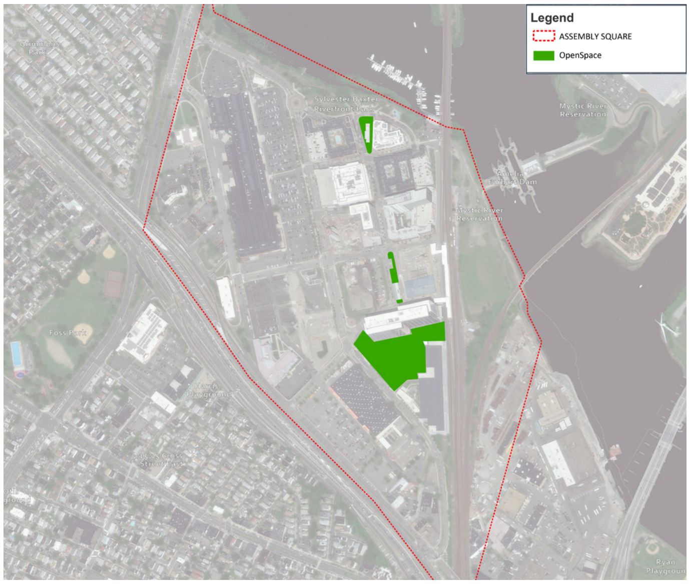
PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

For 94.9% of Somerville residents, one of many city parks is within a 5-minute walk, including Assembly Square. However, the existing large parks in this area are owned by the state. Through creative land use, we should be able to find the open space we need to realize our vision of a greener Assembly Square.


Legend
ASSEMBLY SQUARE
OpenSpace
Sylvester Baxter Riverfront Park
Mystic River Reservation
Foss Park

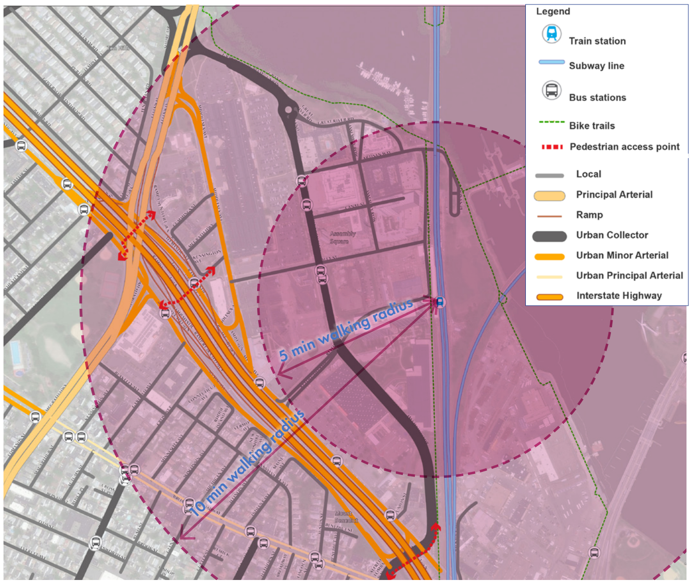
PRIVATELY OWNED OPEN SPACE

There are a few existing privately owned open spaces within Assembly Square. These spaces include the green space owned by Mass General Brigham and the open spaces in Assembly Row, such as those next to JP Licks, Caffé Nero, and Smoke Shop.


Legend
ASSEMBLY SQUARE
OpenSpace

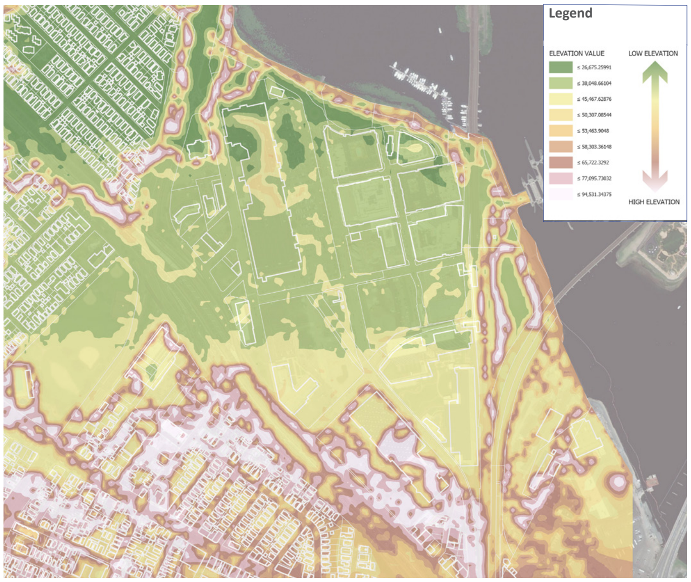
TRANSIT ACCESS

All Assembly Square is within a 10-minute walk of the MBTA's Orange Line transit station, and the neighborhood is also served by the Route 90 bus. The three access points to Assembly Square include Grand Union Boulevard, Fellsway, and a narrow pedestrian sidewalk underneath the I-93 viaduct.


Legend
Train station
Subway line
Bus stations
Bike trails
Pedestrian access point
Local
Principal Arterial
Ramp
Urban Collector
Urban Minor Arterial
Urban Principal Arterial
Interstate Highway
5 min walking radius
10 min walking radius
Assembly Square

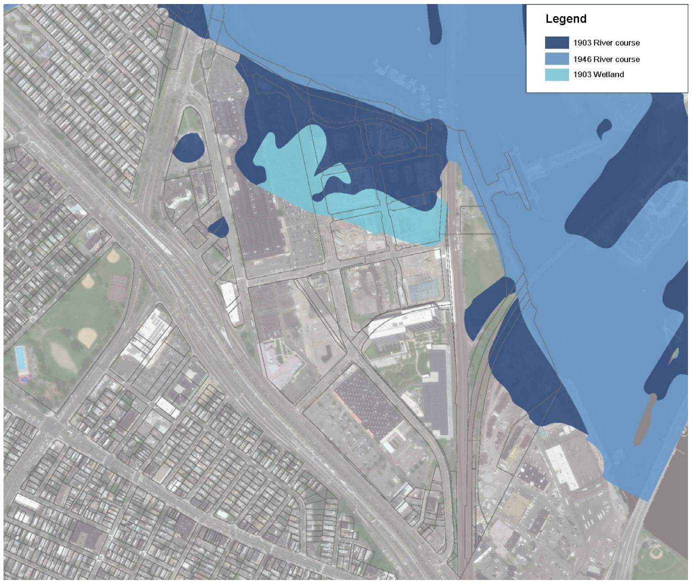
TOPOGRAPHY

Assembly Square is generally flat, with elevations of about 5 to 10 feet above sea level. The Amelia Earhart Dam (AED) was constructed in 1966 and stabilized the upstream Mystic River water level to eliminate tidal activities. The lower Mystic River was converted into a freshwater river due to the dam.


Legend
ELEVATION VALUE
≤ 26,675.25991
≤ 38,048.66104
≤ 45,467.62876
≤ 50,307.08544
≤ 53,463.9048
≤ 58,303.36148
≤ 65,722.3292
≤ 77,095.73032
≤ 94,531.34375
LOW ELEVATION
HIGH ELEVATION

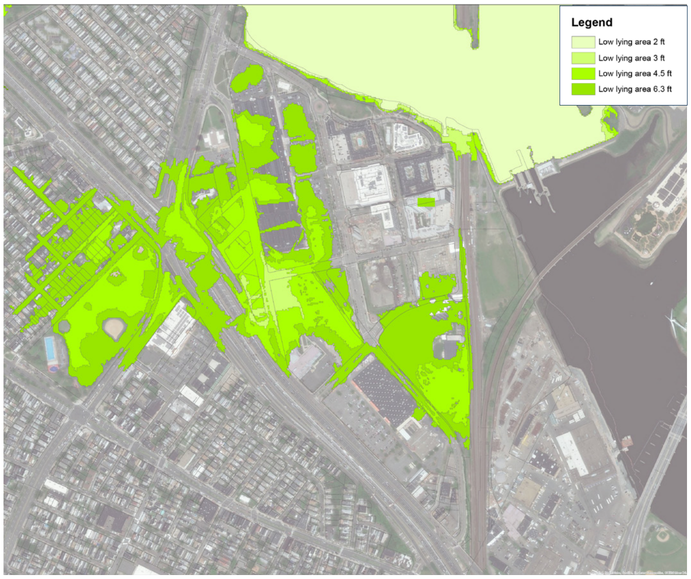
HISTORIC SHORELINE

This area of Assembly Square originally consisted of tidal flats and estuaries. They were filled during the 19th century to serve railroad and industrial uses. The AED was built to protect surrounding areas from storm surge impacts on Boston Harbor. Today the shoreline is occupied by parks and waterfront trails.


Legend
1903 River course
1946 River course
1903 Wetland

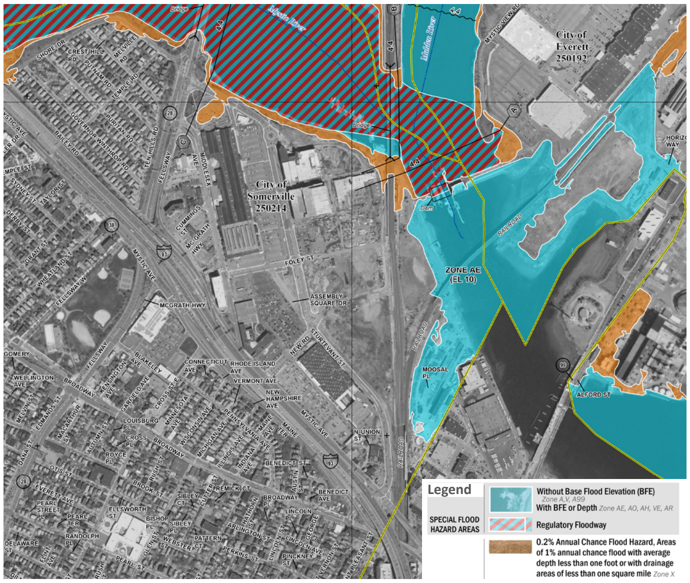
LOW LYING AREAS

The northwest and southeast parts of Assembly Square have the lowest elevations and these areas are most likely to suffer flooding. The existing stormwater system is designed to handle 4.8 inches of rain in 24 hours but rain events larger than that threshold can frequently overwhelm the drains.


Legend
Low lying area 2 ft
Low lying area 3 ft
Low lying area 4.5 ft
Low lying area 6.3 ft

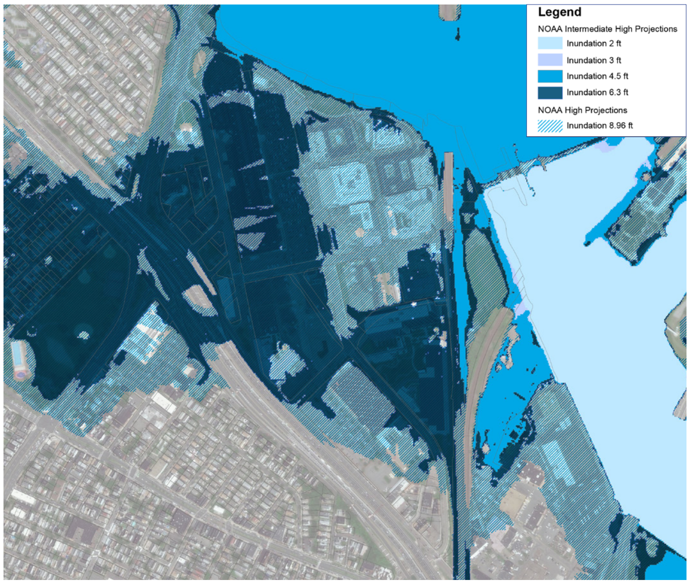
FEMA FLOOD MAP

Updated FEMA flood maps show the coastline of Assembly Square as Flood Zone X. This means the area has a 0.2% chance of flooding in any given year. A portion of Baxter Park is considered Zone AE, or a 1% chance of flooding in any given year.


City of Everett 250192
City of Somerville 250214
Mystic River
ZONE AE (EL 10)
ASSEMBLY SQUARE DR
FOLEY ST
MCGRATH HWY
ALFORD ST
BROADWAY
RAILROAD
Legend
SPECIAL FLOOD HAZARD AREAS
Without Base Flood Elevation (BFE) Zone A,V, A99
With BFE or Depth Zone AE, AO, AH, VE, AR
Regulatory Floodway
0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard, Areas of 1% annual chance flood with average depth less than one foot or with drainage areas of less than one square mile Zone X

SEA LEVEL RISE POTENTIAL IMPACT

Assembly Square is likely to experience impacts from sea level rise and storm surge by 2070 according to the Climate Action Plan. As seas rise, the AED will not offer the same level of protection as today and flooding will likely become a larger problem.


Legend
NOAA Intermediate High Projections
Inundation 2 ft
Inundation 3 ft
Inundation 4.5 ft
Inundation 6.3 ft
NOAA High Projections
Inundation 8.96 ft

CLIMATE CHANGE PLANNING

In Somerville, the climate and resilience conversation is quite advanced and the commitment to new rules and investments is very strong. How can the Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan help that effort?

In 2015, Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone committed to the Compact of Mayors, a global coalition of city leaders dedicated to reducing their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and making their communities more resilient in the face of climate change.[1] Following that commitment, Mayor Curtatone pledged to make Somerville carbon neutral (having a net-zero release of GHG emissions) by 2050. What followed was a series of plans to achieve carbon neutrality, including the City's Greenhouse Gas Inventory (2016), the Carbon Neutral Pathways Assessment (2017), the Somerville Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (2017), and the Somerville Climate Forward Plan (2018 and updated 2024). The plans envision:

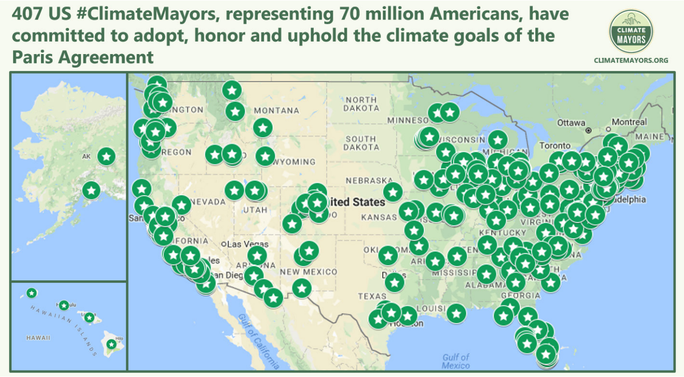
- Implementing net-zero and resilient new building standards,
- Adapting buildings to flooding and heat,
- Improving energy performance in existing buildings,
- Improving equitable low-carbon mobility, including improving bus reliability and expanding bicycle infrastructure,
- Transitioning the City's fleet to electric vehicles,
- Updating stormwater management to consider new flooding events caused by the Mystic River,
- Expanding the urban canopy with resilient trees, and
- Reducing waste.

Climate solutions must be homegrown because many mitigation initiatives that work in one place don't work in others. This is due to factors such as the availability of solar, wind, and geothermal energy as well as local climatic variation in soils, precipitation, and tides. However, cities like Somerville may be able to learn something from cities on the West Coast in one way: plan implementation. These cities are ahead when it comes to leading by example, advocating at the state level for carbon neutrality and the de-carbonization of electricity, and creating a culture of climate action.

The Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan can make climate preparedness a goal for leadership on every level, from the City Council and Planning Board to the residential building managers and local business owners. Our mission is to use our public process and our plan to educate locally on resilience to foster community climate action.

The Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan will be one of the first neighborhood plans for Somerville since the adoption of the Somerville Climate Forward Plan, and it will be the first to incorporate the plan's recommendations on a large scale. We can imagine a neighborhood that goes beyond net zero to become far more self-sufficient—a neighborhood in which people walk to meet their daily needs despite a hotter world and the increased potential for flooding. We have done our job well if neighborhood residents and business owners understand the climate threat and advocate for mitigation and adaptation at the local, state, and even federal level like no other community in the region.

#Cities4Climate


407 US #ClimateMayors, representing 70 million Americans, have committed to adopt, honor and uphold the climate goals of the Paris Agreement
CLIMATE MAYORS
CLIMATEMAYORS.ORG
MONTANA
NORTH DAKOTA
SOUTH DAKOTA
WYOMING
NEBRASKA
NEVADA
UTAH
KANSAS
NEW MEXICO
TEXAS
Las Vegas
MINNESOTA
WISCONSIN
MICHIGAN
Ottawa
Montreal
Toronto
MAINE
KENTUCKY
GEORGIA
ALABAMA
MISSISSIPPI
LOUISIANA
Houston
AK
HAWAII
Gulf of California
Gulf of Mexico

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[1] City of Somerville, somervillema.gov. Retrieved from: https://www.somervillema.gov/news/mayor-curtatone-signs-compact-mayors-address-climate-change

REQUIRING RESILIENCE AT ASSEMBLY SQUARE

The world has seen a rise in sustainable building in the last few decades, and while part of the trend is thanks to a surge in demand for more sustainable structures, most of the achievement can be attributed to a higher standard of building regulations at the municipal level. When Somerville's zoning ordinance was approved in 2019, the environmental standard for new construction was raised higher than neighboring communities causing some measure of resistance from developers.

Upon seeking commentary from various stakeholder groups, some prospective developers of life science buildings argued that the City had raised the bar too high. They said it would cost the city the high-paying jobs and tax revenue that the world-class, multi-story, life science research labs, administrative offices, and campuses would provide. They suggested that Somerville was still an untested market and that developers would simply build in Cambridge, Brookline, Quincy, or one of the other emerging life science markets in Watertown and South Boston.

"No one can build an all-electric building on this site," said one of the property owners who hoped to sell to a life science developer. Life science laboratories are especially energy-consumptive, and the owner felt that nothing short of an all-electric building, powered by solar panels, would produce enough points to meet a LEED Platinum requirement.

In March of 2024, Somerville updated it's Climate Forward Plan with the goal of offsetting more carbon than it produces (called "carbon net-negative") by 2050. The plan proposed reducing emissions from buildings, among other actions. Somerville was one of the first adopters of the Municipal Opt-In Specialized Code which sets ambitious energy efficiency requirements and clear net-zero pathways for developers.

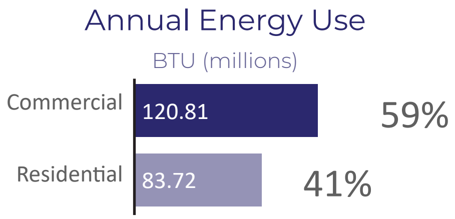
The development of life science buildings has not been slowed by the new regulations, only by the economy. Case in point: 5 Middlesex Ave (now called Assembly Innovation Park) is the large project proposed at Assembly Square, and will include over one million square feet of life science offices for pharmaceutical and technology companies. The 5 Middlesex Ave project alone would mean over 4,000 construction and permanent jobs for the City. [2]

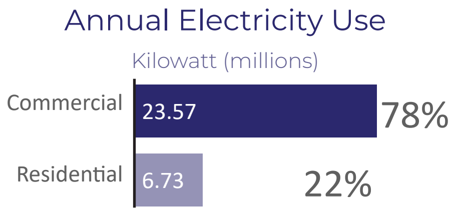
The communities which have climate adaptation within their locally approved plans are the ones that will see the biggest gains in resilience. There will be a cost to the public and private sectors, but as the Somerville Climate Forward Plan makes clear, the threat is dire. The cost of trying to mitigate the damage from climate inaction will far exceed that of planning for resilience.

Acting sustainably is not an option. It's how we move forward.

SUSTAINABILITY is the balance of resources, social well-being, and environmental stewardship while equitably meeting the needs of a growing community and thriving economy.

RESILIENCE is the ability of to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to hazardous events, local impacts, and day-to-day disturbances related to climate change.





77.2 BTU (MILLIONS)

ANNUAL ENERGY USE PER HOUSEHOLD

Note: Data from Urban Footprint/ESRI/ AMERICAN COMMUNITIES SURVEY(ACS)

The LEED v4.1 BD+C guidelines, the latest version of the standards developed by the U.S. Green Building Council, provide a framework for green building and construction based on a wide variety of factors including the land's proximity to public transit and bicycle facilities, water efficiency, light pollution, rainwater management, and renewable energy.

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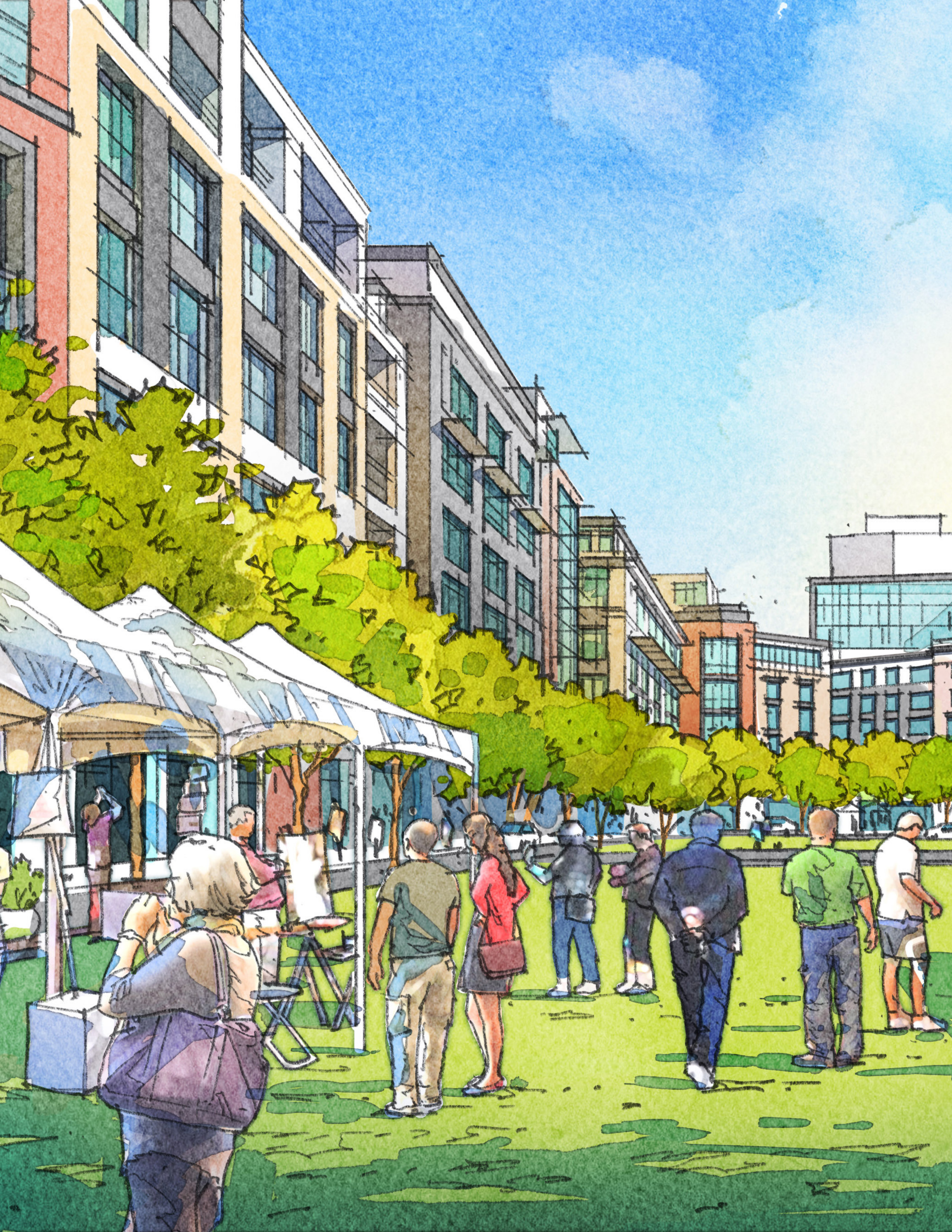
[2] Boston Real Estate Times. June 15, 2020. Retrieved from: https://bostonrealestatetimes.com/biomed-realty-to-acquire-somerville-property/



2. Public Process

The Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan was created from a vision generated by the residents and stakeholders of Assembly Square and Somerville. This chapter details the process for receiving the community's ideas.

PUBLIC PROCESS

The Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan is a long-term master plan and zoning recommendations report that establishes an idealistic path for future growth in the neighborhood. This plan was created with the involvement of the public, property owners, civic groups, stakeholders, and residents. When the Covid-19 pandemic made a planned series of in-person meetings, events, and community interactions impossible, the design team responded with an engaging virtual process that allowed people to communicate with the City, the design team, and fellow residents from the comfort and safety of their own homes. This remote, digitally based approach helped ensure that all segments of the community had a voice in this key process, even while social distancing.

The design team facilitated online engagement through the City's SomerVoice website, stakeholder meetings and an interactive virtual charrette. A series of robust public workshops, presentations, surveys, questionnaires, polling, and one-on-one conversations helped us create a collective vision for the future of the Assembly Square neighborhood.

VIRTUAL SITE VISIT AND ANALYSIS

As discussed in our "Background" chapter, the Assembly Square neighborhood is a distinctive area within Somerville that has its own particular set of challenges and opportunities. Once an industrial complex, Assembly Square transformed into a suburban big-box retail location. The identity of the area drastically changed over the past 10 years with the development of Assembly Row and Mass General Brigham as well as changes to the Assembly Marketplace. Current applications for development indicate an emerging biotech center and more residential uses. Today, the area is at an important crossroads in its development. Assembly Square can continue to evolve into a commercial center, or it can become a mixed-use neighborhood. The design team learned about the forces at play in the area and spoke to large property owners and individual residents alike to understand the dynamics of the neighborhood.

Site Analysis

The design team compiled a series of maps, observations, and economic information to obtain a better understanding of Assembly Square as it is today. Much of this initial analysis is included in the "Background" chapter of this report.

Residential Survey

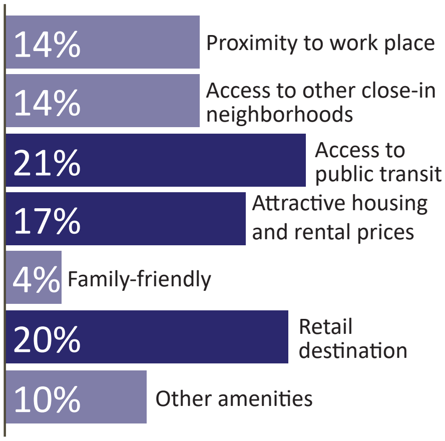
A survey was sent to Assembly Square residents to ensure that the voices of renters and owners were heard. The survey helped us better understand what brings people to Assembly Square and what keeps them in the neighborhood.

Stakeholder Meetings

Starting in August 2020, the design team conducted ongoing meetings, phone calls, and interviews with a variety of stakeholders in Assembly Square to learn how current efforts and concerns as well as future goals might be represented in the plan. The design team heard from property and small business owners, residents, and members of the local community, including "Youth Voices" and the Mystic View Task Force. In addition, the design team met with groups from the City and other public agencies focused around the topics important to the City including:

- Engineering & Utilities
- Mobility
- Sustainability & Environment
- Planning & Zoning
- Economic Development
- Public Space & Urban Forestry
- Parks and Recreation

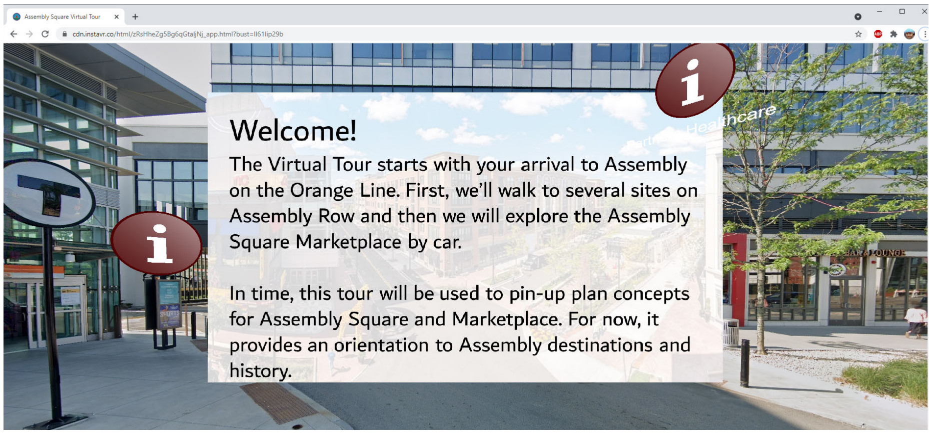
What **ATTRACTED** you to Assembly Square?



Residential Survey Results

Assembly Square Virtual Tour

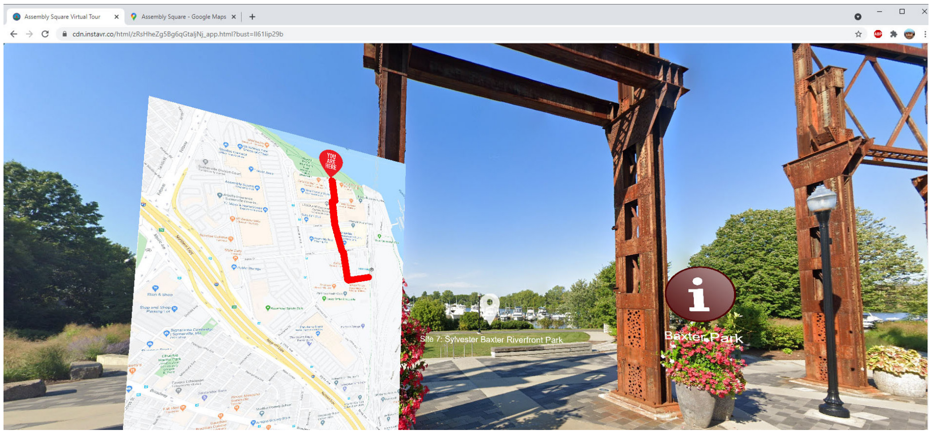
Drawing on our team's knowledge of the area, and online resources like Google Earth, the design team created an online site tour with a web-based virtual reality app. A link to the app was shared on the SomerVoice project website, allowing the public to tour the project site remotely. The tour walked people through the site from two points of view. The first approached the site on foot along the Orange Line MBTA station and down Assembly Row. The second approached the site by car, revealing views of the site from I-93. Points of interest and team observations and insights were highlighted along the routes to educate and enhance the user experience.

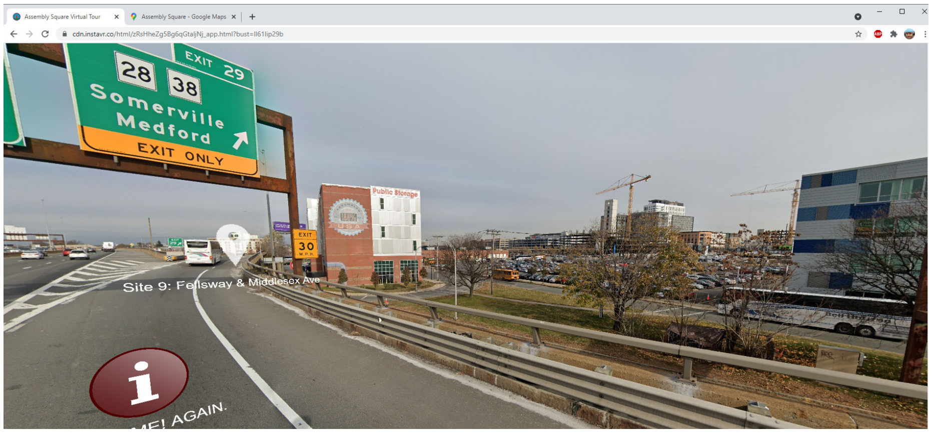

Assembly Square Virtual Tour
Healthcare

Welcome!

The Virtual Tour starts with your arrival to Assembly on the Orange Line. First, we'll walk to several sites on Assembly Row and then we will explore the Assembly Square Marketplace by car.

In time, this tour will be used to pin-up plan concepts for Assembly Square and Marketplace. For now, it provides an orientation to Assembly destinations and history.


Assembly Square Virtual Tour
Assembly Square - Google Maps
Site 7: Sylvester Baxter Riverfront Park
Baxter Park


Assembly Square Virtual Tour
Assembly Square - Google Maps
EXIT 29
28
38
Somerville
Medford
EXIT ONLY
Public Storage
EXIT 30
Site 9: Fellsway & Middlesex Ave

Virtual Tour Stops

Pedestrian Tour:

- Assembly Station – MBTA Orange Line Station
- Corner of Revolution and Assembly Square
- Assembly Row and Foley Street
- Assembly Row and Artisan Way
- Artisan Way and Great River Road
- Sylvester Baxter Riverfront Park

Car Tour:

- I-93 and Exit 29
- Fellsway and Middlesex Avenue
- Fellsway and Grand Union Boulevard
- TJ Maxx parking lot on Grand Union Boulevard
- Grand Union Boulevard and Assembly Square Drive

INTERACTIVE ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

The SomerVoice website and Somerville by Design were used as the virtual hub for all project activities. This resource helped the public learn more about the project through videos, virtual site tours, and links to online meetings throughout the virtual charrette. By answering a series of surveys and open-ended questions posted on the SomerVoice website, the public helped to shape the plan concepts.

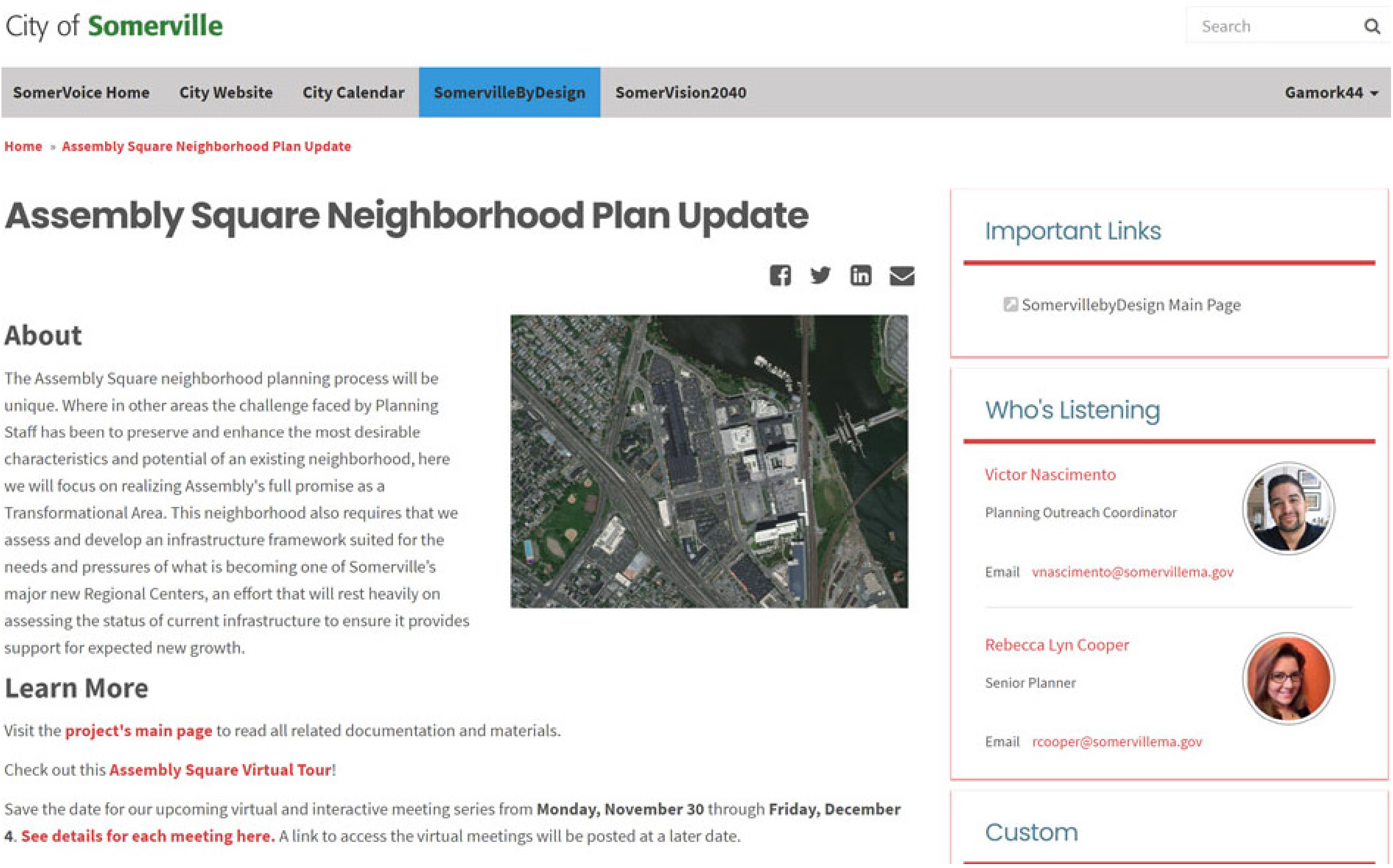
5,080+ WEBSITE VIEWS

630+ DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS, SURVEY PARTICIPANTS, INTERACTIVE TOOLS, SOCIAL MEDIA LIKES & FOLLOWERS

370 ONLINE POLL RESPONSES

550+ VIEWS OF THE YOUTUBE FILMS

12,000+ TRACKABLE MEDIA IMPRESSIONS



Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan Update

About

The Assembly Square neighborhood planning process will be unique. Where in other areas the challenge faced by Planning Staff has been to preserve and enhance the most desirable characteristics and potential of an existing neighborhood, here we will focus on realizing Assembly's full promise as a Transformational Area. This neighborhood also requires that we assess and develop an infrastructure framework suited for the needs and pressures of what is becoming one of Somerville's major new Regional Centers, an effort that will rest heavily on assessing the status of current infrastructure to ensure it provides support for expected new growth.

Learn More

Visit the **project's main page** to read all related documentation and materials.

Check out this **Assembly Square Virtual Tour**!

Save the date for our upcoming virtual and interactive meeting series from **Monday, November 30** through **Friday, December 4**. **See details for each meeting here.** A link to access the virtual meetings will be posted at a later date.

Important Links

SomervillebyDesign Main Page

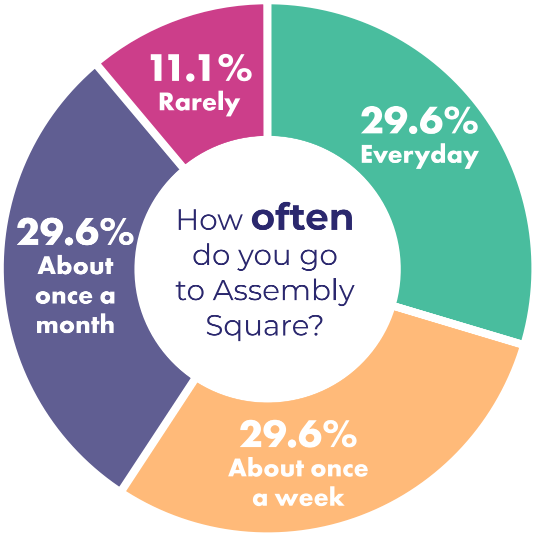
Who's Listening

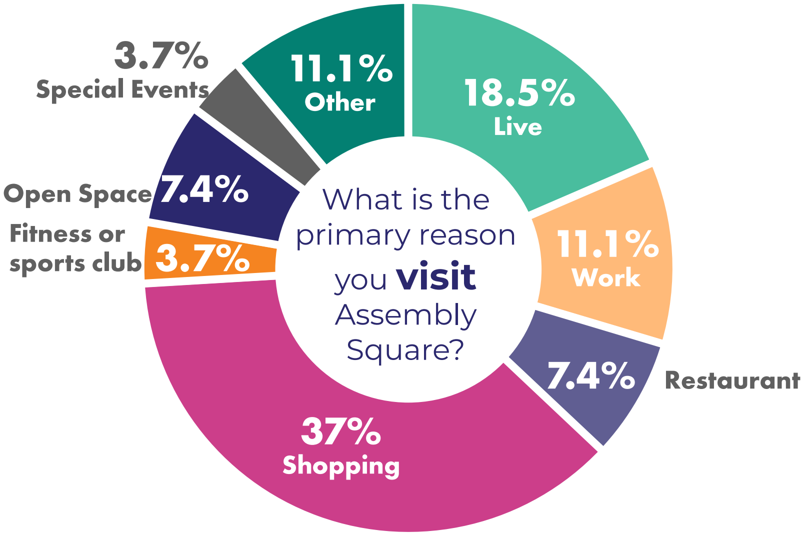
Victor Nascimento
Planning Outreach Coordinator
Email vnascimento@somervillema.gov

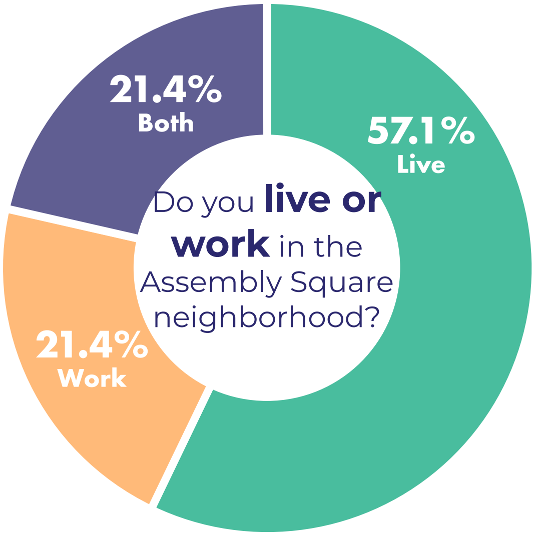
Rebecca Lyn Cooper
Senior Planner
Email rcooper@somervillema.gov

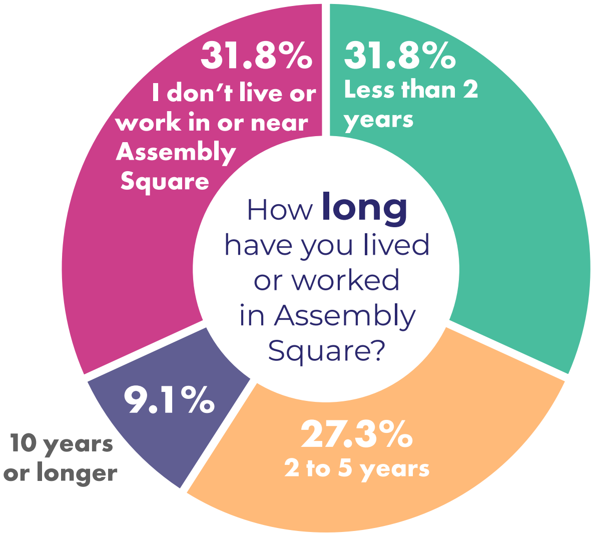
Custom

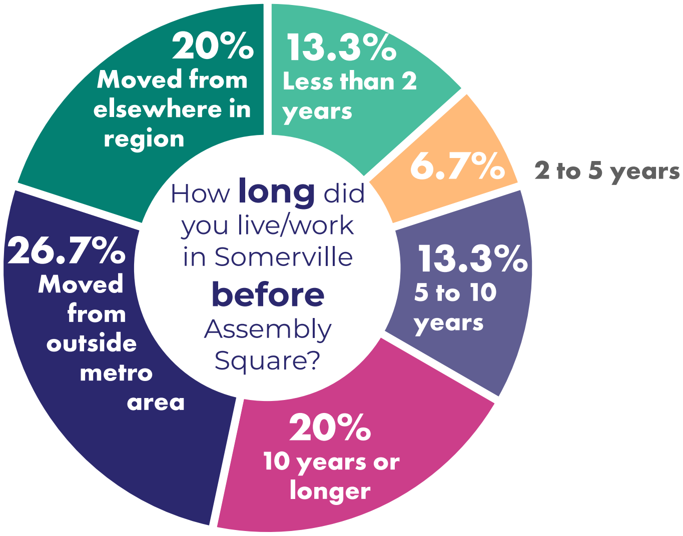
Online Survey Responses

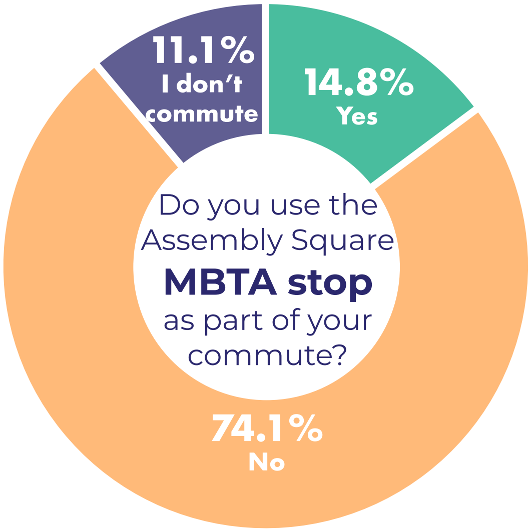












How would you rate the availability of the following at Assembly Square?

1. Restaurants
2. Shops
3. Apartments
4. Playground/Green space
5. Professional offices
6. Grocery store
7. Housing
8. Medical services
9. Other
10. School / Daycare
11. Drug store

Others: Hotel, affordable housing, green corridor for wildlife, affordable options

What would you like to see more of at Assembly Square?

1. Playground/Green space
2. Drug store
3. School / Daycare
4. Other
5. Grocery store
6. Medical services
7. Restaurants
8. Housing
9. Professional offices
10. Shops
11. Apartments

Others: Green corridors & native plants, aerial yoga, outdoor grills in parks, dog park, affordable housing, walking connection with Encore Casino Services (senior, food, etc), arts/community space, more small businesses

How concerned are you about the following at Assembly Square?

1. Walkability
2. Connect to neighborhoods
3. Green Space
4. Traffic
5. Affordability
6. Noise
7. Safety
8. Density
9. Parking
10. Other
11. Schools

Others: The insane amount of paved space and lack of trees, limit cars in shop area to residents and delivery, There is too much parking, wasted space

How excited are you about bringing more of the following to Assembly Square?

1. Cyclist & pedestrian safety
2. Increased non-car travel
3. Places for recreation
4. New places to shop & eat
5. Enhance character
6. Adding to the tax base
7. New job opportunities
8. Other

Others: Improving green space near the dam, green corridor for wildlife, affordable options, I'd like it to be nicer to walk around certain area

What is your preferred mode of travel in and around Assembly Square?

1. Walk
2. Transit (subway)
3. Bike
4. Private Car
5. Transit (bus)
6. Rail
7. Carpool

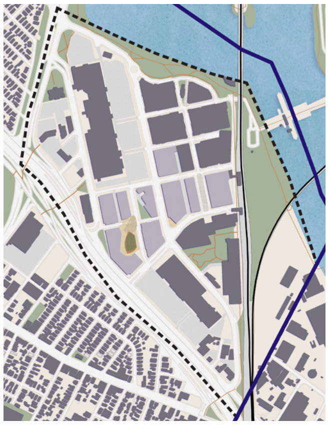
PRELIMINARY SCENARIOS

A series of diagrammatic scenarios were created to illustrate the development potential for the Assembly Square neighborhood and to facilitate early conversations about its future.

The purpose of this exercise was not to pick a design scenario but to identify what strategies to lead with and what elements of the plan people liked or did not like. The resulting vision plan is a composite of these elements using both the green and urban strategies in unison.

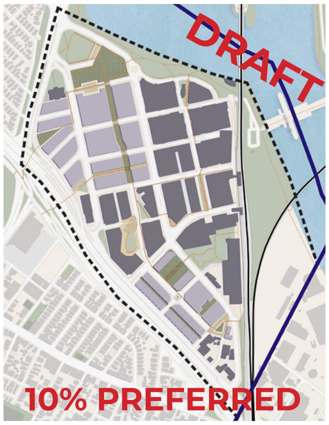
Initial polling of the scenarios revealed a preference for different scenarios as noted.

Existing

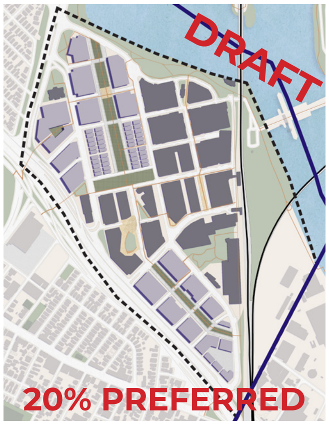


More **GREEN** in the next phases

Assembly Green

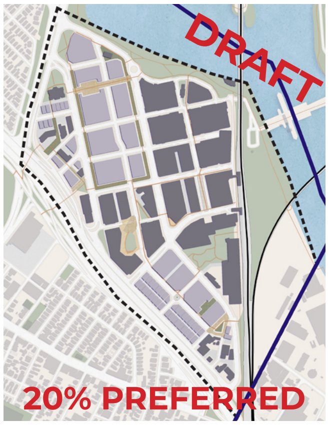

DRAFT
10% PREFERRED

Central Green


DRAFT
20% PREFERRED

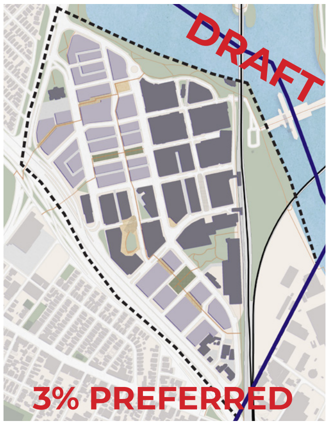
CONTINUE the Assembly Row "formula" in the next phases

The Grid

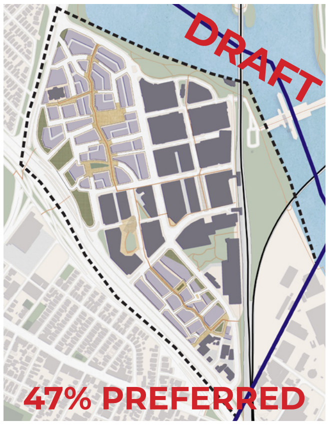

DRAFT
20% PREFERRED

More **URBANISM** (walkability & placemaking) in the next phases

The Trio


DRAFT
3% PREFERRED

Somerville Barrow


DRAFT
47% PREFERRED

VIRTUAL PUBLIC CHARRETTE

A virtual public charrette was held from Monday, November 30, 2020 through Friday, December 4, 2020. Members of the design team engaged the community in a series of public meetings, workshops, and events.

Kick-Off Presentation & Breakout Room Sessions

The virtual charrette week began with a kick-off presentation and breakout room sessions on Monday, November 30, 2020. These were held virtually over Zoom. The meeting began with Mayor Curtatone encouraging participants to dream big. He reminded them that dreaming big had brought an Orange Line MBTA stop to Assembly Square when everyone said it was impossible. He said that dreaming big had also resulted in the successful Assembly Row development.

During this event, the design team presented initial findings based on the existing conditions in Assembly Square. The design team discussed issues such as connectivity, mobility, infrastructure, urban design, and economics.

Following a kick-off presentation, participants broke off into smaller groups for a hands-on design session. Participants discussed and documented their most important issues using interactive digital maps to show what was missing from the Assembly Square neighborhood that could improve their quality of life. At the end of the session, each table distilled their solutions and identified "3 Big Ideas" to present to the larger group. As the groups presented, potential subjects for consensus and key design ideas emerged.

Virtual Charrette Events

November 30, 2020

Kick-Off Presentations

Small Group Discussions

December 1- 3, 2020

Technical Meetings

Open Design Studio

December 4, 2020

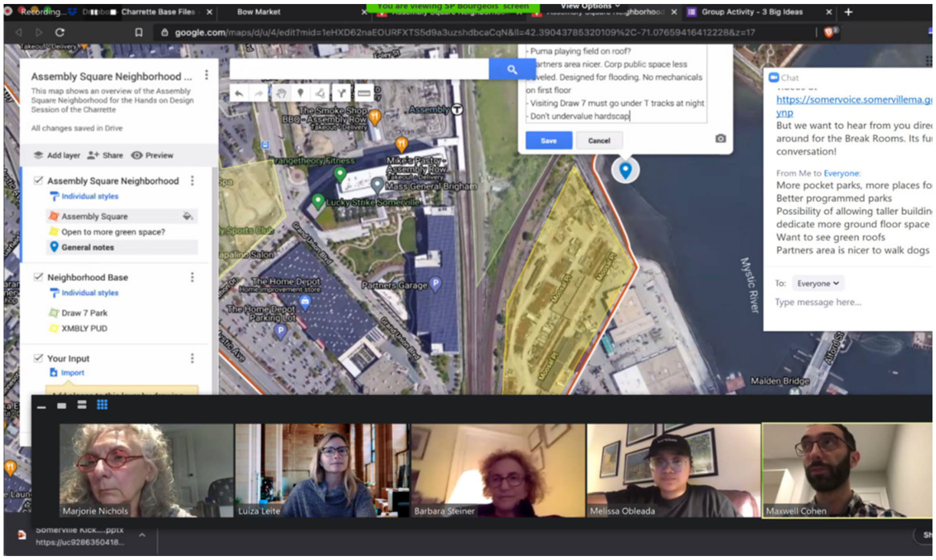
Work-in-Progress Presentation

70+

ATTENDEES

11 TABLES

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS


Recording...
Charrette Base Files
Bow Market
View Options
Group Activity - 3 Big Ideas
google.com/maps/d/u/4/edit?mid=1eHXD62naEOURFXTS5d9a3uzshdbcaCqN&ll=42.39043785320109%2C-71.07659416412228&z=17
Assembly Square Neighborhood ...
Add layer
Share
Preview
Assembly Square Neighborhood
Individual styles
Assembly Square
Open to more green space?
General notes
Neighborhood Base
Individual styles
Draw 7 Park
XMBLY PUD
Your Input
Import
Save
Cancel
Chat
Mystic River
Malden Bridge
Marjorie Nichols
Luiza Leite
Barbara Steiner
Melissa Obleada
Maxwell Cohen

This map shows an overview of the Assembly Square Neighborhood for the Hands on Design Session of the Charrette

All changes saved in Drive

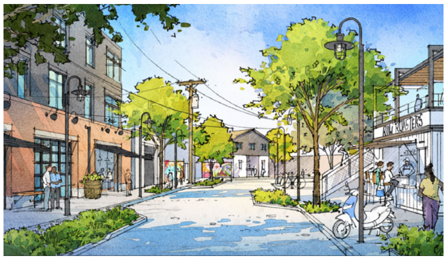
- Puma playing field on roof?
artners area nicer. Corp public space less
veled. Designed for flooding. No mechanicals on first floor
- Visiting Draw 7 must go under T tracks at night
- Don't undervalue hardscap

https://somervoice.somervillema.g
ynp
But we want to hear from you direc
around for the Break Rooms. Its fu
conversation!

From Me to Everyone:
More pocket parks, more places fo
Better programmed parks
Possibility of allowing taller buildin
dedicate more ground floor space
Want to see green roofs
Partners area is nicer to walk dogs

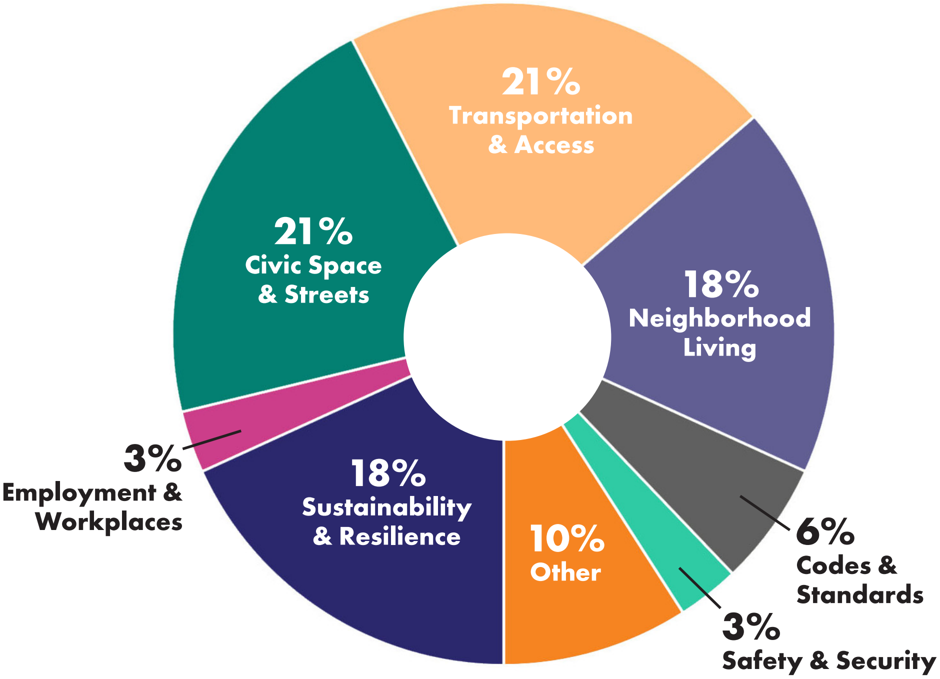
To: Everyone
Type message here...

Screenshot of the kick-off meeting and small group discussions



3 Big Ideas

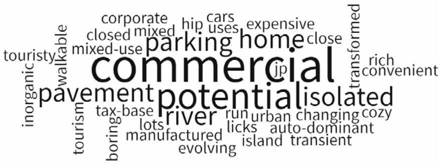
Each group categorized the main theme of their big ideas. Of all the ideas discussed, transportation, access, streets, and civic spaces were of the largest concern, followed closely by both neighborhood living and sustainability and resilience.



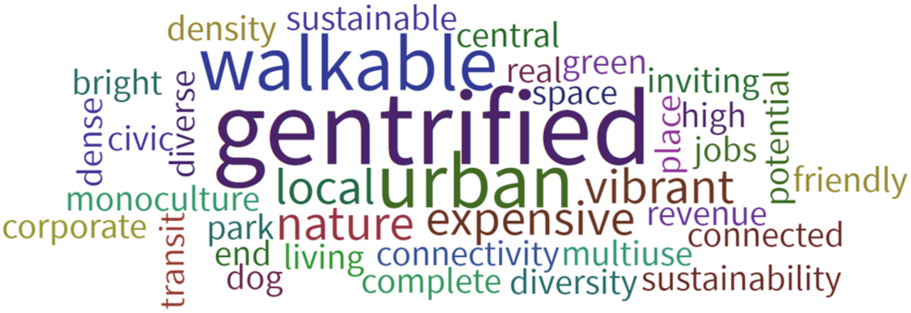
One Word Answers

As part of the live keypad polling, the design team asked participants to tell us one word that came to mind about the Assembly Square neighborhood.

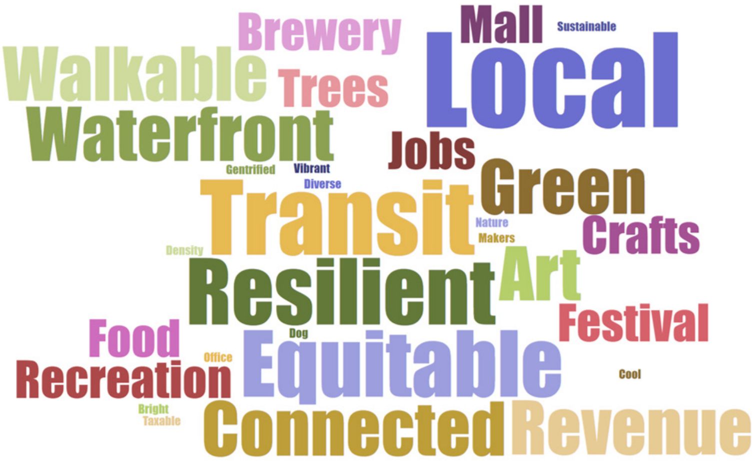
NOW



IN THE FUTURE



Participants were asked for one word that summarized what they would like to see **IN THE FUTURE**



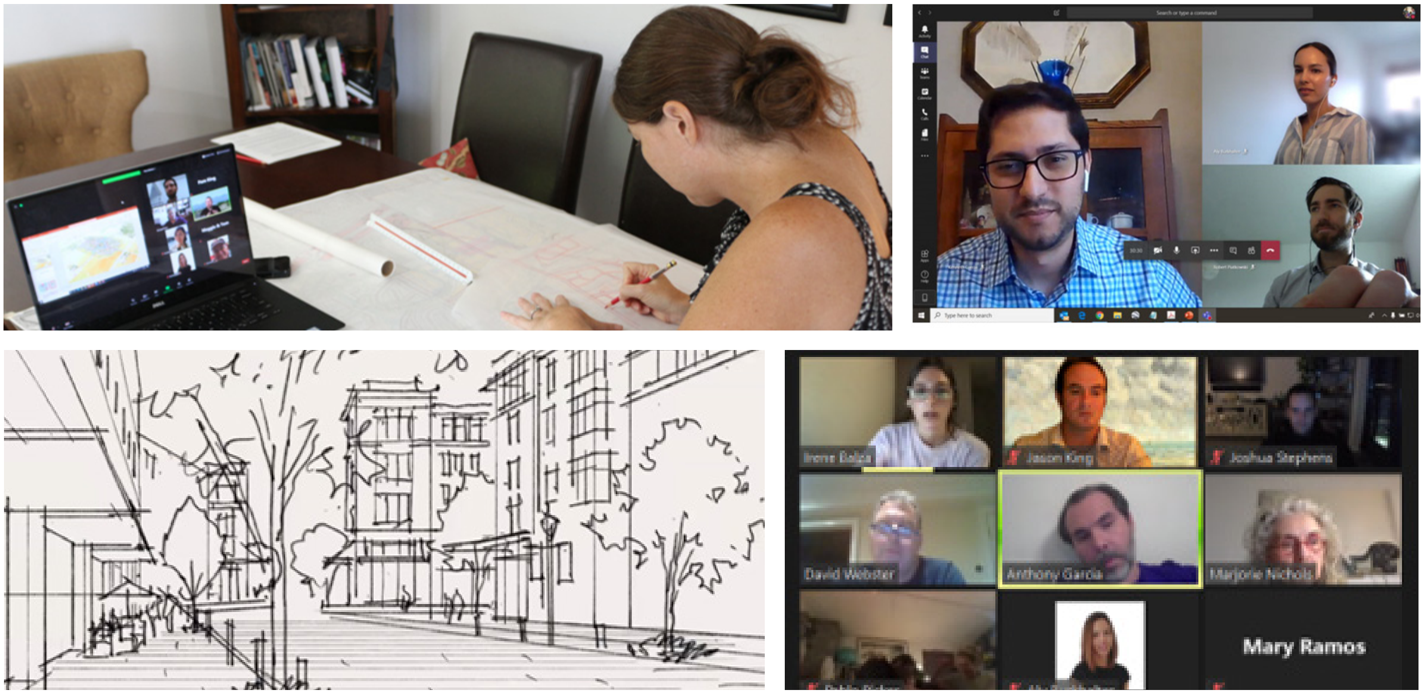
Word size corresponds to the number of people who responded with that word.

Open Design Studio & Technical Meetings

Following the kick-off presentation and breakout sessions, the design team began working on ways to address the themes and concerns that emerged during the table workshops. A synthesis map was created summarizing the ideas from an earlier table discussion. During the week, each member of the planning team studied specific areas in Assembly Square so they could illustrate how the design could best address community concerns.

Members of the public were encouraged to participate in the process by attending any of nine online open design studios. The open studios enabled members of the community to see the work as it was being produced, engage in discussions about the potential solutions and bring additional suggestions of their own. J.J. Zanetta of Zanetta Illustrations drew people's ideas in real time—a popular, interactive segment of the sessions called, "Veduta with J.J.". Various technical meetings were held throughout the week to discuss the details of the plan as they emerged, to ensure that the vision plan was implementable, and to discuss any concerns. Meeting topics included mobility, economic development, planning and zoning, engineering, and sustainability. In addition, the team met with numerous City activist groups, particularly the Mystic View Task Force, to hear concerns from interested residents who have spent over a decade advocating for better development of the Assembly Square neighborhood.

240+ VIRTUAL STUDIO VISITORS & MEETING ATTENDEES



Pictures from the open design studio

"Work-in-Progress" Presentation

The week culminated in a work-in-progress presentation on Friday, December 4, 2020. This summarized the week's events, engagement results, preliminary designs and policies, and it confirmed the initial vision for the future of the Assembly Square neighborhood.

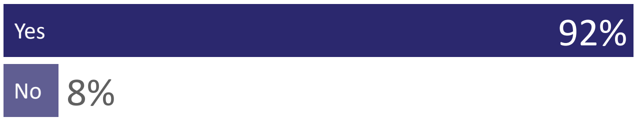
Topics included the illustrative plan, mobility, infrastructure, and economic development. Polling measured responses to various design concepts and draft policies.

Draft Report

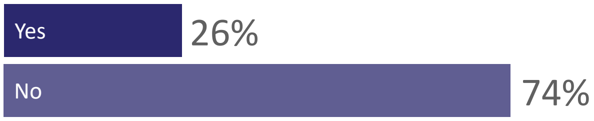
Following the virtual public charrette, the design team further refined and detailed the draft ideas presented at the work-in-progress presentation to create the Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan. As part of this refinement phase, the design team continued to have conversations with technical experts, city administration, and city staff, all of whom helpfully encouraged and challenged the design team to push the plan to be big and bold.

The resulting ideas and policies encompassed within this report stand as a testament to the power of creativity, collaboration, and community.

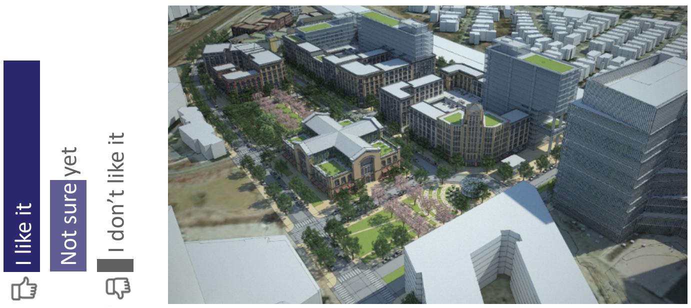
Did you **ATTEND** any of the charrette events this week? (open studio, kick-off meeting, etc.)



Do you **LIVE** in the Assembly Square Neighborhood?



What do you **THINK** of this idea?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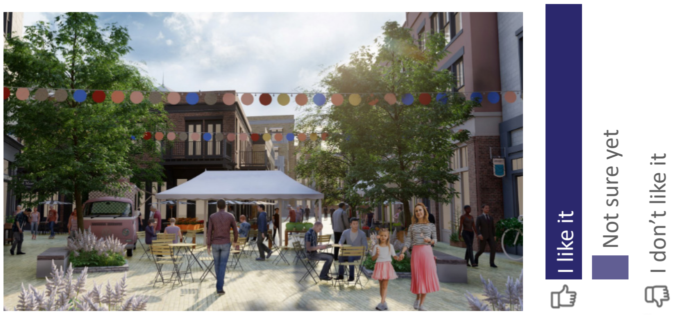
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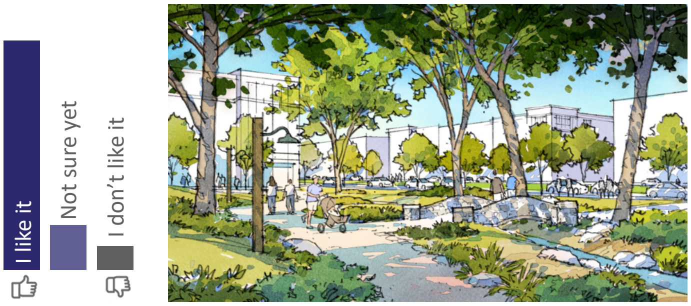
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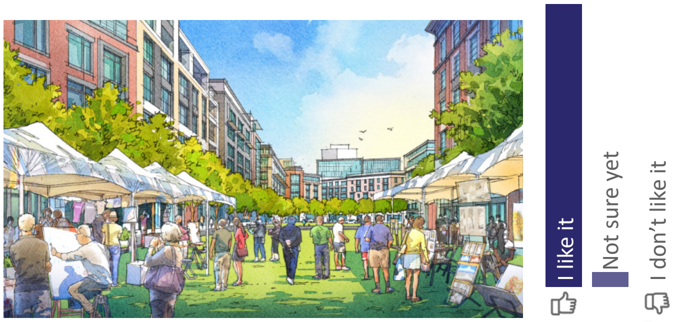
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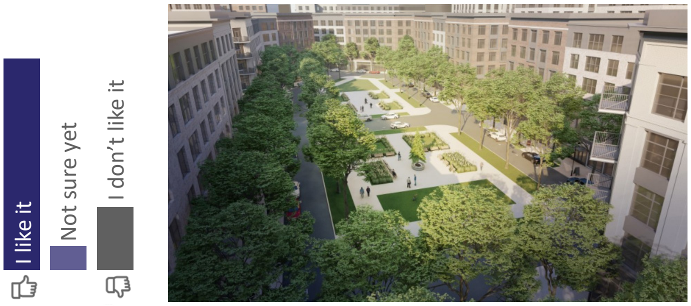
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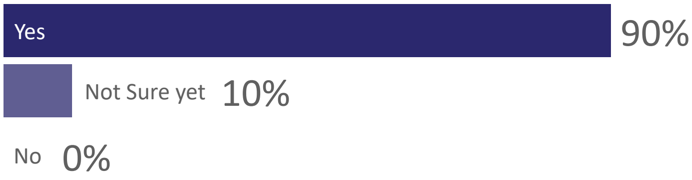
Do you think the DRAFT plan presented tonight is **ON THE RIGHT TRACK**?



Fiscal Impact Analysis

Following the release of the initial public draft of this report in June 2022, the City commissioned a fiscal impact analysis to ensure the viability of the plan and its recommendations. The anaylsis tabulated the City's costs and revenues for the proposed development as a tool to undertand the overall financial costs and benefits of increased development in Assembly Square.

Revenue comes from real estate and personal property taxes at current rates. Costs are estimated using trends from the Annual Comprehensive Fiscal Report (ACFR). Additional calculations use City Data Points, data from the US Census American Community Survey, and Public Use Microdata Sample. This data helps create scenarios for development estimates and offers options tailored to different situations.

The analysis included the proposed program, new requirements for maintaining public spaces, and significant capital improvements being considered. The results of the fiscal impact analysis informed the final draft of the plan and are included in Chapter 6: Economics within this report.

3. 5 Big Ideas

The 5 Big Ideas grew from conversations held with the Assembly Square community. Although specific illustrated details may change as the plan is implemented, the "5 Big Ideas" should remain intact.

1. **Build great new places (that are compatible with and respectful of context)**
2. **Increase access to nature and build sustainably**
3. **Demand safe, comfortable, and interesting streets and increased transit availability**
4. **Grow revenue-generating uses for Somerville**
5. **Cultivate the Assembly Square community and connect physically and socially to the broader city**

1. BUILD GREAT NEW PLACES

Design matters: buildings and streets should come together as a cohesive whole to create places people can enjoy

To create vibrant, pedestrian-oriented districts, every aspect of the public realm must be designed as a group, including the businesses, residences, and workplaces. Motor vehicle elements (such as travel lanes, parking, and curbs), pedestrian components (such as trees, sidewalks, and lighting) and building features (such as shopfronts, awnings, and columns) should work to create a unified outdoor space. A well-designed street can accommodate shoppers, diners, pedestrians, cyclists, on-street parking, and travel lanes comfortably. Buildings should be brought up to the back of the sidewalk and face other buildings across the street.

Buildings

There is a place at Assembly Square for everything, but design is key. Assembly Square can feature human-scale development that includes the public realm while still accommodating large-scale buildings like life science complexes. Large-footprint buildings can be integrated into the urban fabric with active uses, such as retail and restaurants, along the ground floor of major pedestrian thoroughfares. Towering structures should be located away from the pedestrian core and adjacent to highways.

Blocks

Block size is the number one factor for walkability. Pedestrians will rarely choose to walk unless they feel there is a relatively direct path to their destination and the walk will be less than five minutes. The length of a single block face should be no more than 600 feet and ideally 450 feet long. A block should be composed of multiple buildings or have design features that break a monotonous facade. Where this is not possible, designing mid-block passages to be safe, interesting spaces for pedestrians can preserve the walkable scale of the neighborhood.

At the same time, a connected street network is a city's main public space and is essential for distributing traffic. Assembly Square should seek to increase the street network and create more blocks which creates more connectivity and enhances economic vitality.

Scale of Public Spaces

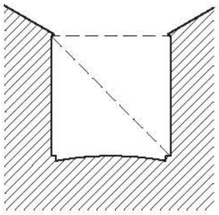
While the ground floors of buildings should be designed in proportion to pedestrians, the perceived height of buildings should be designed in proportion to the street. The preferred building-to-street ratio is 1:1 to 1:3. This creates a sense of safety and enclosure that is important in urban environments because the public realm — the space between buildings — becomes the public's living room.

Height-To-Width Ratio

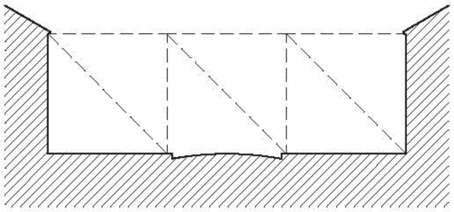
The height-to-width ratio is the proportion of spatial enclosure. If the width of space is such that the cone of vision encompasses less street wall than open sky, the degree of spatial enclosure is slight. As a general rule, the tighter the ratio, the stronger the sense of place.

The ratio of 1:6 is the perceivable maximum. The ratio of 1:3 is best for public spaces. The ratio of 1:1 creates pedestrian paseos. Note that the ratio is not based merely on the curb to curb measurement but instead on the entire right-of-way and including building frontages, from building face to building face. In the absence of spatial definition by facades, disciplined tree planting is an alternative. Trees aligned for spatial enclosure are necessary on thoroughfares that have substantial front yards.

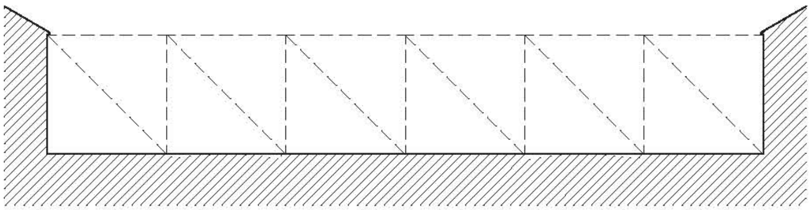
Excerpted from
The Lexicon of New Urbanism



1:1
(The best for thoroughfares)



1:3
(The best for squares)



1:6
(The perceivable maximum)

Welcoming Public Spaces

Public spaces should feel open and available to all. However, participants in the virtual charrette remarked that with recent development projects, some of the open spaces feel private and uninviting. Residents do not feel comfortable using these spaces even though they were not gated and had no signage telling them to “keep out”.

Public spaces should be open along at least one street and have multiple entrances. Streets provide visibility into a space so outdoor areas can feel more welcoming. The public spaces should include both passive and active uses for spaces to feel open and available to all, and encourage a sense of shared ownership for the community.

The Elements of a Neighborhood

Neighborhoods are places to shop, work, socialize and more. Participants proposed multiple uses, including a performing arts space, a library, and a fire station. Other community needs include a grocery store, a late-night pharmacy, a dog park, and places for children to play.

Playgrounds and tot lots should be located within a five-minute walk of most households. Several should be featured in a typical neighborhood, less than a half-acre in size, and include play equipment, soft surfaces, benches, and ample shade.

Going Forward

The City must continue to consider the relationship between buildings, streets, and pedestrians as part of the approval process. Development review should evaluate the urban context so new buildings are positioned and architecturally designed to form agreeable streets and public spaces. Likewise, the streets themselves should be sized to work for all users.

Large-footprint buildings should be subject to design scrutiny on a site-specific, case-by-case basis. Ground floor uses should not be pre-permitted or allowed as-of-right. Instead, uses should be conditional and subject to review and approval to ensure all building and street elements are coordinated.

DESIGN MATTERS

There are many design choices to consider when developing a neighborhood, ranging from the street layout to the color of a new building. The most important choices, with the greatest impact on the community, are those related to urban design — the design of the streets and public spaces and how buildings relate to those spaces.

Fronts and Backs

Buildings and lots have fronts, sides, and backs. How these elements relate to one another forms the neighborhood character. Building fronts ideally face the fronts of other buildings, though they sometimes can face the sides. However, the front of a building should never face the back of another. When building fronts face one another, both buildings benefit from street activity.

Streets

Well-designed streets are important as both public spaces and thoroughfares for mobility. Street lighting and trees help to define the public realm while also making the pedestrian feel safer and more comfortable. Trees, even in winter, add ambience and a sculptural quality to the streetscape.

Building-to-Street Relationship

The physical and functional relationships between buildings and public spaces are essential to creating safe, comfortable and inviting places. When buildings have interesting and friendly entries, stoops and storefronts, they attract activity.

Building Standards

These are the rules related to building placement and massing (such as setbacks, build-to lines or zones, and building height). They require buildings to align with the sidewalk and ensure the building form enhances public spaces.

Parking

Parking is an urban necessity. By locating parking where it is not visible from streets and public spaces, it allows the fronts of buildings to have active ground-floor uses with sidewalks and amenities along the street.

2. INCREASE ACCESS TO NATURE AND BUILD SUSTAINABLY

Create high-quality parks and public spaces in Assembly Square

Public space is crucial for a vibrant neighborhood. Somerville needs more open, green, sunlit spaces, but the land for parks and public spaces is precious in such a densely populated city. Parks must be strategically placed, deliberately designed, multi-use, and well-connected to promote walkability. The public space needs to function ecologically, providing natural services such as stormwater capture and natural habitat, but it should also accommodate the social needs of the community, such as gathering and recreation. The waterfront park should be expanded and connected with other parks throughout the neighborhood. SomerVision 2040 identifies Assembly Square as an important transformational area with potential for creating new parks and public spaces as development occurs. Somerville's neighborhoods are historically centered around squares. Assembly Square needs to be given its own central "Assembly Square" that brings the neighborhood together.

Celebrate the connection to the river

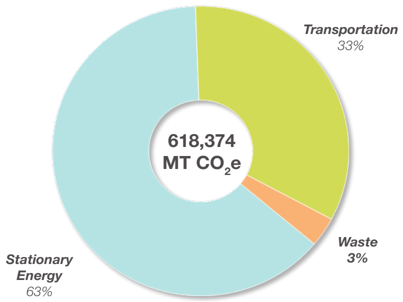
There are currently several proposed projects that would promote walkability and enhance the connection between Assembly Square and other Somerville neighborhoods like Ten Hills, East Somerville, and Winter Hill to the river. The trail between Draw Seven State Park and Route 99 in Sullivan Square is one such project; the bike/pedestrian bridge across the Mystic River is another. Signage and wayfinding systems should guide users to the riverfront trails, while gathering and seating areas along the green network could accommodate a variety of uses. Trees along all trails will ensure shade, and adding native plants would provide valuable food sources and habitat for pollinators and wildlife. Increasing access to the riverfront will increase livability and extend the 'premium' of river views deep into the district.

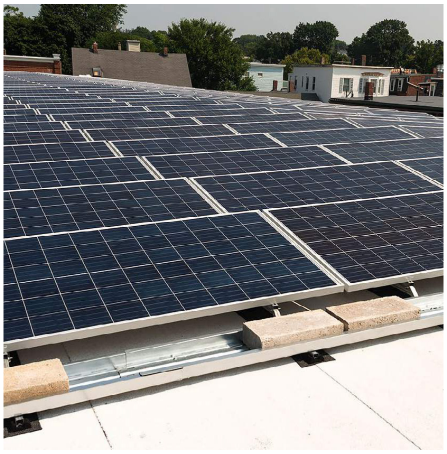
Build sustainability

Fossil fuels and carbon emissions are driving climate change. Green buildings that apply sustainable materials and clean practices can greatly reduce carbon emissions. All new buildings in Somerville must meet the Municipal Opt-In Specialized Building Code.

Urban heat island effect (phenomenon in which urban areas are warmer than rural due to increased paving) can be reduced by increasing tree canopy, installing green roofs, and using reflective roofing and pavement materials. A system of heat energy transfer can potentially harness the existing wastewater infrastructure that runs under Assembly Square to heat buildings.

2016 Emissions by Sector





Renewable energy can be generated on-site through solar arrays and other methods, to help meet the building's total annual energy demand

Public space should be designed to be welcoming and accessible

Transportation fueled by gas-powered engines creates a large share of carbon emissions. Single-occupancy motor vehicles are the biggest culprit. Creating a walkable neighborhood and increasing transit services can reduce the miles traveled by single-occupancy motor vehicles in and around Assembly Square. Walkability and bikeability should be a design priority for the area.

Assembly Square's energy production and carbon reduction goals should be measured district-wide instead of on a project-by-project basis. This allows design flexibility, especially for the owners of smaller properties where on-site renewable energy generation may not be possible. District energy systems, or Combined Heat and Power (CHP) District Energy, can increase efficiency, reduce long-term costs, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Improve air quality and water quality

Recent studies show that exposure to airborne ultrafine particulates emitted from traffic has long-term public health impacts. The Wellbeing of Somerville Report (2017) highlights air pollution as an issue with serious health implications, with the neighborhoods adjacent to I-93 being impacted most directly. New residences and civic space should not be located within 500 feet of the highway when possible in planning the further development of the area. Buffer plantings along the I-93 boundary will assist in capturing and storing air pollutants and carbon dioxide. Buildings close to the highway should be taller to help block particulate matter, and they should have central air purification systems integrated with the HVAC facilities. The requirements that reduce energy consumption can also improve air quality and water conservation because of the potential reduction of on-site use of fossil fuel.

Most of Somerville currently has a combined sewer system, but the City is taking steps to separate its stormwater and wastewater sewer systems. One consequence of these updates is that stormwater runoff will no longer be cleaned along with other wastewater. This necessitates a commitment to improving the quality of stormwater runoff. What's more, stormwater infrastructure standards are evaluated using current rainfall levels rather than future projections. Given that the City's Climate Vulnerability Assessment (2023) shows that the 25-year storm will likely become the 10-year storm by 2070 with increased precipitation in all storms, new development projects in Assembly Square should use drainage design criteria that reflect these future projections. Infiltration beds, rain gardens, porous pavement and other green infrastructure practices should also be encouraged.

An example of a rain garden

Tree wells can be used as a green infrastructure device to capture stormwater

Native plants can require less water, fertilizer, and maintenance than many traditional garden plantings

3. DESIGN SAFE, COMFORTABLE, & INTERESTING STREETS AND INCREASE TRANSIT AVAILABILITY

Increase "mode split"

Assembly Square features a mix of urban and suburban development with a great deal of space dedicated to cars and their storage. With appropriate development parameters and transportation interventions, the City can split the mode choice more evenly among the various transportation options (transit, walking, cycling), decreasing single-occupancy motor vehicle use while still providing parking to visitors from other areas.

Achieving a more balanced mode split is as much about providing multimodal facilities as coordinating land-use planning and transportation planning. This community goal can be reached with a combination of frequent reliable transit service, comfortable, interesting, and safe streets for walking and biking, and an Assembly Square with a diversity of uses, places, and people.

Assembly Square's goal is for 75% of trips to and from the site to not involve a single-occupancy motor vehicle. Another goal should be to design the neighborhood so that no internal trips are ever taken by car.

Balanced street spaces

Assembly Square's streets should be designed for everyone, including pedestrians, those with disabilities, cyclists, transit riders, freight and delivery drivers, motorists, and those who are ride-sharing. The streets should provide access to businesses and residences but also allow for socializing, shopping, dining, and celebrating. In Assembly Square, the goal is to balance mobility and placemaking. There should be less focus on moving people through the neighborhood and more on being in the neighborhood.

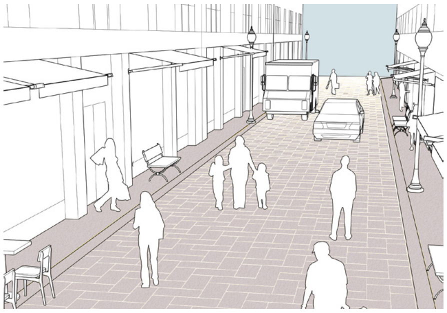
While streets like Grand Union Boulevard will need to accommodate motor vehicles, other streets can be focused on pedestrians and cyclists. Areas like Assembly Point can provide a European feel, with streets that are narrower and prioritize pedestrians. A paseo like this could extend from the northern to southern end of the site (like La Rambla in Barcelona). And Middlesex Avenue can be rebalanced from a wide back street to be a complete street fronted by buildings.

Increase transit access

A convenient, safe, and reliable transit system is essential if people are to choose transit over single-occupancy motor vehicles. This is particularly vital when it comes to connecting Assembly Square to the rest of Somerville, the broader Boston Region, and other destinations.

The MBTA Orange Line station in Assembly Square is a huge achievement for Somerville and exemplifies how dreaming big and

> *"The design of cities begins with the design of streets. To make a good city, you need good streets, and that means streets where people want to be."*
>
> - John Massengale
> *Street Design: The Secret to Great Cities & Towns*


A shared street rendering

Parking is an essential element of modern society, but its impacts and cost are high. A well-managed parking system can contribute greatly to the health and image of any community. One of the keys to a successful system is the development of effective strategies and policies.

working hard can result in real changes. However, the trains are packed during peak hours and arrive from Medford already full. An increase in service frequency and an exploration of other transit options will help address this issue. These include alterations to bus route 90, a new bus route linking Assembly Square to the MBTA Green Line and other Somerville destinations, and a possible water taxi route across the Mystic River.

Create streets for pedestrians

Assembly Square streets should be designed to prioritize people, with a special focus on walkable sidewalks buzzing with social and economic activity. Streets should be safe, comfortable, and interesting for pedestrians, featuring continuous street walls with many windows, doors, shopfronts, and awnings. Highly visible four-way high contrast crosswalks should be used for pedestrian street crossings.

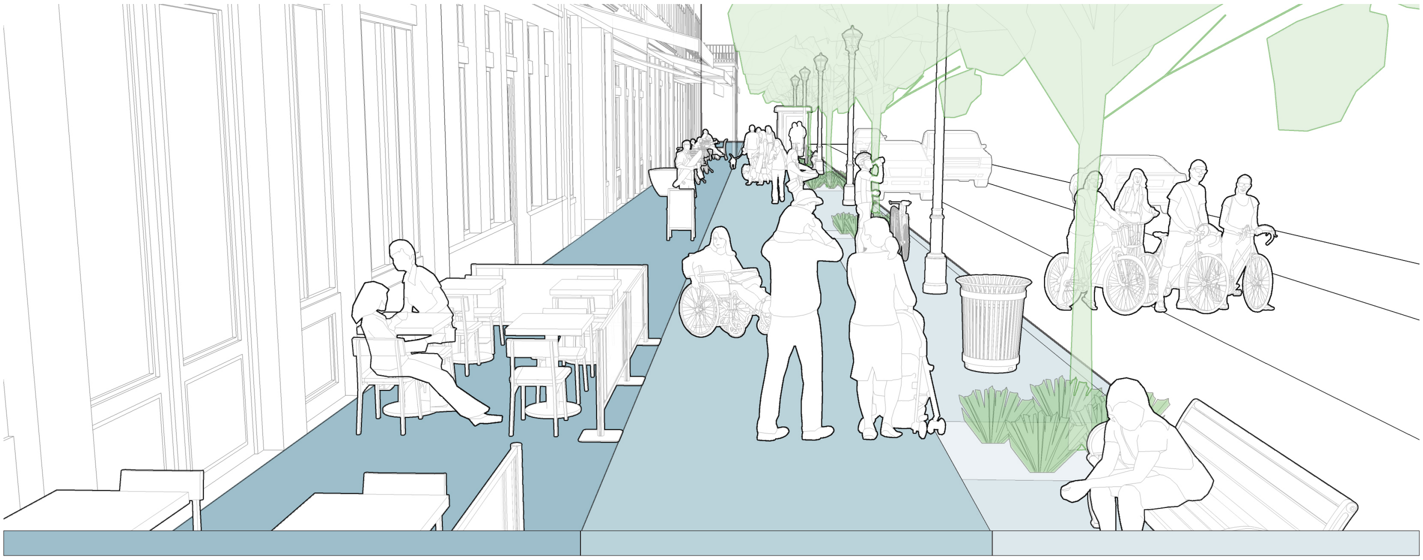
Assembly Square's sidewalks should be designed using three functional zones: frontage, walkway, and furnishing. Each zones purpose remains the same across the neighborhood, but the specific design and dimensions of these zones of sidewalk will vary depending on the individual character of each street and block.

Create streets for cyclists and low-speed mobility

Bike infrastructure for commuting and recreation should be expanded throughout Assembly Square. Ideally, a full ring of neighborhood bike infrastructure that connects to the larger regional bike path network would be created. Bikes should be accommodated above the curb level or at least by parking-protected bike lanes whenever possible.

Ensuring ample, secure, and convenient bike parking is a critical step for encouraging use. Bike parking within Assembly Square should be provided on sidewalks, on the street, within parking lots, and in parking garage facilities.

Additionally, the development of other low-speed, motorized mobility options offers significant potential benefits for Assembly Square, however, they come with safety challenges similar to those of cycling. Scooters and e-bikes should not be encouraged to operate on sidewalks because they negatively impact pedestrian safety and convenience. Protected lanes should be available and sufficient so that bikes and scooters have no desire to be on sidewalks or roadways. Assembly Square will plan for low-speed mobility modes by incorporating them into the planning for bike lanes and other bike facilities.



Frontage

This space extends a buildings' activities. It is the location for seating, signs, retail displays, and landscaping.

Walkway

The clear path is dedicated to pedestrian travel. It must be accessible and free of physical obstructions to allow for the movement of people.

Furnishing

This spaces primary purpose is to separate the clear path from motorists and provide a location for street furniture, trees, and utilities.

4. GROW REVENUE-GENERATING USES FOR SOMERVILLE

Expand the City's non-residential tax base

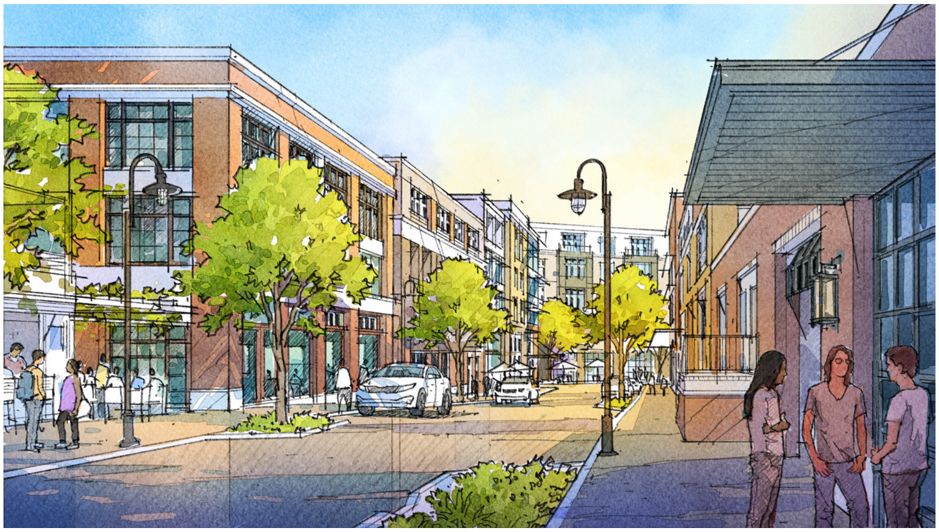
Assembly Square's current contribution to Somerville's tax base is significant, and the neighborhood is well on its way to vastly increasing its market values and tax revenues. Expanding the tax base is about creating more assets on the City's tax rolls in the form of new or improved business properties. This spreads the cost of municipal operations across more entities. The result is more money to enhance government-funded community features that add to Somerville's quality of life.

Growth at Assembly Square allows residential property taxes elsewhere in the city to remain manageable. Property taxes are the primary means for funding local education, police, fire protection, government, roads, and infrastructure like sewers, bridges, street trees, and streetlights.

Somerville is a largely residential community and must optimize its mixed-use places. In Assembly Square, office, retail, restaurant, entertainment, hotel, and residential uses are planned, under construction, or entirely foreseeable. During the virtual charrette, participants recommended allowing just enough residential uses to ensure 18-hours of street activity. The plan recommends continuing the effort to attract a diverse portfolio of revenue-generating uses with an emphasis on offices and labs.

Enhance the site's current strengths

One of Assembly Square's strongest assets is its proximity to the Mystic River. The neighborhood boasts nearly a mile of waterfront and shoreline access through the State-owned parks at the river's edge. These beloved waterfront parks can continue to be enhanced to continually engage the local community and draw regional visitors year-round. Priority actions include creating a loop of connected park spaces throughout the neighborhood that join to the riverfront parks at both ends, adding waterfront programming, and implementing inventive sustainability and resilience projects that enhance recreation opportunities. The improvements at Draw Seven State Park should be supported by increasing access through better signage (by Artisan Way) and a new entrance over the rail line by Revolution Drive. The Sylvester Baxter Riverfront Playground is a popular destination within Assembly Square, the space can be potentially expanded to accommodate more users. More children's parks should be created within the neighborhood. Assembly Square has already proven that it has a strong business cluster effect. Now the goal is to expand and deepen this effect by branding the entire neighborhood, broadening its economic, commercial and office offerings, and appealing to complementary enterprises of all sizes and types.



Assembly Square has the ability to have something for almost everyone. The land regulations should enable the uniqueness possible for each portion of the neighborhood

Encourage Life Sciences

At Assembly Square, innovative office developers who specialize in providing high-end office and lab space are successfully attracting investment. As a result, the area is emerging as a life sciences hub with a growing mix of offices for health care services, technology, and research.

Assembly Square should offer a market space where businesses scale and grow — an incubator — where metro neighbors, students, entrepreneurs, artists, and tourists come together. Creating a complete, mixed-use, 18-hour neighborhood will help to attract businesses, employees, and residents for long-term occupancy, job creation, and population growth.

Collaborate with developers

The area's developers and Somerville's planners have focused on achieving and maintaining a new avenue of economic growth for Assembly Square that pays for itself and contributes to the City's overall budget commitments. The neighborhood residents, planners, and other key stakeholders within the City's business ecosystem are broadly concerned with improving livability and equity for residents through policies that support people and sustainable growth across the board. The City's planners should continue to collaborate with developers to keep a diverse mix of national and local retailers at all scales and price points in future construction projects.

Develop new catalytic niches

While commercial space is key to tax revenues and developers, balancing the neighborhood needs more indirect investments, such as encouraging the arts community, that can bring overall gains to the local economy. Attracting and promoting investments in small-footprint business markets will help to create a fully rounded and decidedly local neighborhood. Assembly Square should seek out investments from, and create partnerships with, area corporations (social responsibility programs), community nonprofits, and academic institutions. This could help the neighborhood benefit from tailor-made cultural experiences. For example, new street art or museum-sourced artifacts on loan from area nonprofits and universities to bring more people into the community either to visit for the day or to live.

Build well and build for everyone

The Somerville community has high standards, and the City is positioned to demand the best from every development. New developments and new businesses must be of the highest quality to meet the needs, demands, and aspirations of the community.

The complete Assembly Square neighborhood should have a range of uses to meet the daily needs of the community, including a grocery store or late-night pharmacy, parks that connect the different parts of the neighborhood, and additional housing for the workforce along with more units appropriate for larger households.

Update zoning

Zoning should reflect and encourage development that is in line with the community's vision for the Assembly Square neighborhood. Whether that is best achieved by adjusting the existing code or creating additional form-based standards should be fully explored.

It is important to note that not all of Assembly Square should look the same. Some areas by the highway should feature taller structures and not allow residential uses or civic spaces. Other areas should feature lower-profile buildings that create the feel of a comfortable outdoor "room." In some cases it will be appropriate to encourage larger-footprint buildings to accommodate lab and office spaces. In others, smaller lots should allow low-scale incremental development. Bottom line: the code should reflect the nuance of the vision while also allowing flexibility to ensure that the right kind of development is encouraged.

5. CULTIVATE THE ASSEMBLY SQUARE COMMUNITY AND CONNECT PHYSICALLY AND SOCIALLY TO THE BROADER CITY

Connect physically

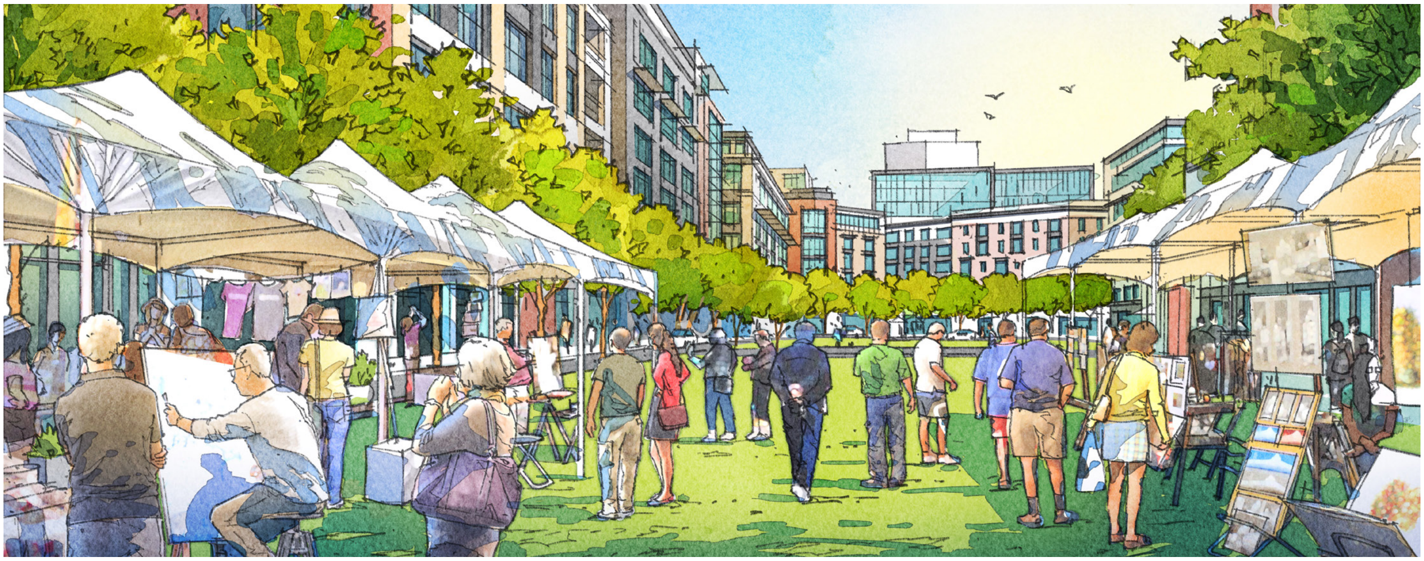
Assembly Square can feel disconnected from the rest of Somerville because it is bounded by large transportation facilities and the Mystic River. It is important to establish more physical connections to the rest of the city to integrate the neighborhood, particularly the adjacent areas of Ten Hills, Winter Hill, and East Somerville. Improving the Kensington Connector, making Fellsway easier to cross on foot or bike, and adding a bike/pedestrian bridge which crosses the river are all possible solutions.

Transit provides a critical connection to Assembly Square, and enhanced transit may be possible. In time, the site will have a large enough residential population and host a sufficient number of destinations to become a candidate for Bus Rapid Transit along Fellsway, and more frequent local bus and MBTA Orange Line service. Additionally, Draw Seven State Park can have improved access with the addition of a connection over the rails near the MBTA Orange Line station by Revolution Drive.

Connect socially

Assembly Square is a relatively new area in a city of otherwise well-established neighborhoods. It was not until the development of housing at Assembly Row and the relocation to Assembly Square of Mass General Brigham, a major employment center, that the area became more than a commercial hub. Young business improvement districts, main street associations, and neighborhood and homeowner associations are just beginning to form and need support. Spaces with civic uses, or spaces for NGOs and non-profits, would make Assembly Square a center of live social and political activity.

Public art can take various forms, such as murals, sculptures, large-scale installations, or music. A good piece of public art can enhance and transform a public space, creating a sense of place and community. The culture and traditions of Somerville can be expressed in a piece of public artwork, manifesting the unique identity/stories of the community to residents and visitors.



A central civic space can provide a place for the neighborhood to come together and be the Assembly Square the neighborhood is centered around

Enhance the Assembly Square neighborhood identity

When most people in the Greater Boston region think of Assembly Square, they think of Assembly Row and the Assembly Marketplace. Both have done an excellent job of building their brands. But as Assembly Square develops, the identity of the neighborhood must broaden. Whether through street design, furnishings, or wayfinding signage, Assembly Square needs to forge its own community character and all-inclusive identity.

Arts and culture reflect the spirit of a place so incorporating public art into a community promotes economic growth and sustainability. it also strengthens cultural identity, stimulates local involvement, increases social cohesion, and enhances health and belonging. Artists can connect to the neighborhood and make authentic spaces that are completely unique to Assembly Square.

Make space for small, local, independent businesses

In the virtual charrette, residents of Assembly Square talked about how the neighborhood lacked some of the more distinct, independent, and locally owned establishments. Federal Realty, one of the site's principal property owners, discussed how attracting small business retailers is a major responsibility for the company's development team. They pushed back against the perception that Assembly Row and Assembly Marketplace are just chain stores. Over 10% of the tenants are small businesses, and Federal Realty has acknowledged that increasing that balance is their responsibility and goal.

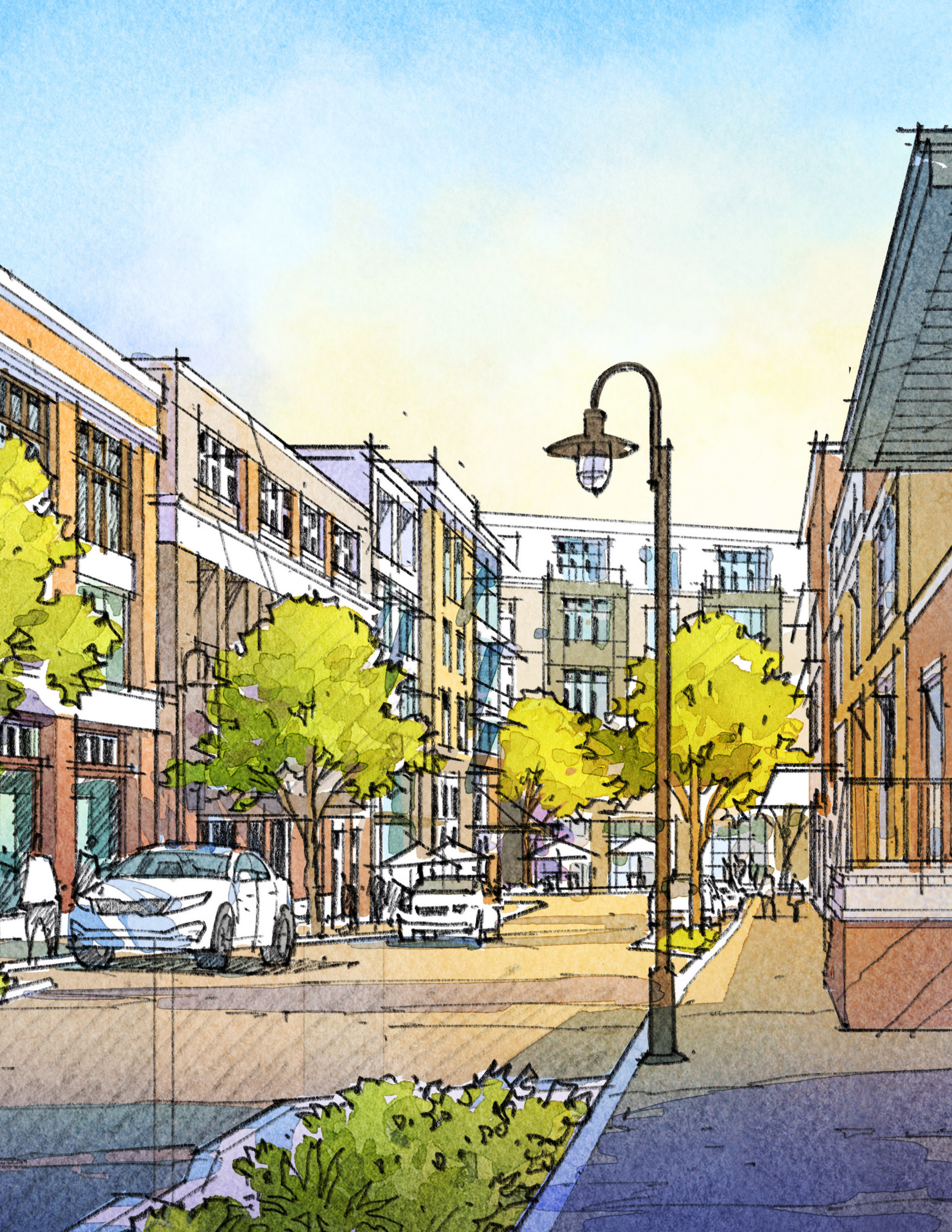
Business development teams from Federal Realty will often attend small craft fairs and farmers' markets with the goal of providing temporary spaces, carts and kiosks to smaller businesses. It is difficult for small businesses to compete with major chains because the cost of occupancy: the rent is lower for tenants seeking a ten-year lease for a large space, but small businesses tend to prefer one-year leases with less square footage. To address this issue, Federal Realty frequently offers reduced rents and smaller storefronts to "mom-and-pop" operations in order to achieve local distinctiveness.

Attendees of the virtual charrette asked if it might be possible to require affordable spaces for small businesses in the same way affordable housing is required. While this is an interesting idea worth exploring, at present it is not clearly supported by State statutes, has not been widely implemented nationally, and has not been tested in State courts. Still, there are different ways to potentially help establish and grow local retail and small businesses. Approaches could include offering smaller spaces with corresponding lower lease rates or offering spaces with below-market lease prices (achieved via public subsidy).

Cultivate the Assembly Square community

As the mixed-use development at Assembly Square grows, so will the residential development. To accommodate the range of needs, build the Assembly Square community, and make the neighborhood suitable for all ages, there should be an array of housing options for a wide variety of people, including rental and ownership opportunities.

People want to visit — and live in — authentic places. They seek authenticity in food, drink, art, music, and space. Often, people will frequent independently owned establishments because they feel a connection with the business owner or operator. A locally owned business is more likely to express a distinct vision and is less likely to adopt uniform aesthetics. A healthy neighborhood has a mix of both corporate chains that can bring in new people and small local businesses that can become locally loved. Micro-chain, family-operated, and startup businesses are key to a resilient local economy.



4. The Plan

This chapter lays out an aspirational vision for the Assembly Square neighborhood, offering a glimpse of what the future could look like if the plan's concepts are implemented over the next 5-10 years.

ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN

The illustrative plan for the Assembly Square neighborhood addresses Somerville's current needs and offers big, bold possibilities for the future. Plan ideas touch on multiple focus areas and envision **great new places that are compatible with and respectful of community context**. The illustrative plan shows one possible scenario of how these places might develop by bringing to life the proposed streets, buildings, alleys, parking locations, and open spaces of a full future build-out of the Assembly Square neighborhood.

Of course, big changes don't happen overnight. The plan is designed to be implemented one piece at a time, as opportunities arise. Although some plan details may change over time to meet physical, regulatory, or market constraints, the main concepts should be followed.

The plan calls for **growing revenue-generating uses for Somerville**, increasing the commercial tax base to keep residential taxes manageable. It shows new development where existing land is not achieving its highest and best use. This is illustrated in the Assembly Marketplace and Assembly Square South focus areas, where large single-story retail buildings with large surface parking areas are re-imagined as mixed-use, mid-rise buildings to serve a diverse set of neighborhood needs. Assembly Square is emerging as a life science center, with high-rise lab and commercial buildings proposed for the Middlesex Avenue corridor. If this trend is encouraged as the plan intends, it could help the City meet some of those aforementioned revenue-generating goals.

When looking at the future of Assembly Square, it's vital to recognize the site's vulnerability in an era of increased flooding and to implement climate mitigation strategies through **increased access to nature and building sustainably**. This includes reducing the carbon footprint by decreasing the use of single-occupancy motor vehicles and increasing the amount of green space and urban canopy. This plan shows new mixed-use, LEED Platinum buildings with green roofs, and additional green civic spaces that could be utilized for storm water management.

As Assembly Square attracts new development, workers and residents will **demand safe, comfortable, and interesting streets and paths as well as increased transit** to get to and around Assembly Square. The plan shows more streets connecting existing development across the entire neighborhood. For example, a center street between Middlesex Avenue and Grand Union Boulevard would be a pedestrian alternative to parallel streets focused on motor vehicles, connecting different civic spaces for a more interesting pedestrian journey. It would offer a delightful setting for a neighborhood walk, provide restful places to linger and a picturesque view from surrounding buildings. Several shared streets are proposed that could create safe and engaging spaces which prioritize pedestrians and can be closed to traffic as needed for community events.

Lastly, as Assembly Square grows to meet the needs of its residents and builds great new places to attract more people, it must better **connect physically and socially to Somerville and cultivate the Assembly Square community**.

FOCUS AREAS:

① **Assembly Marketplace**
See more on page 58

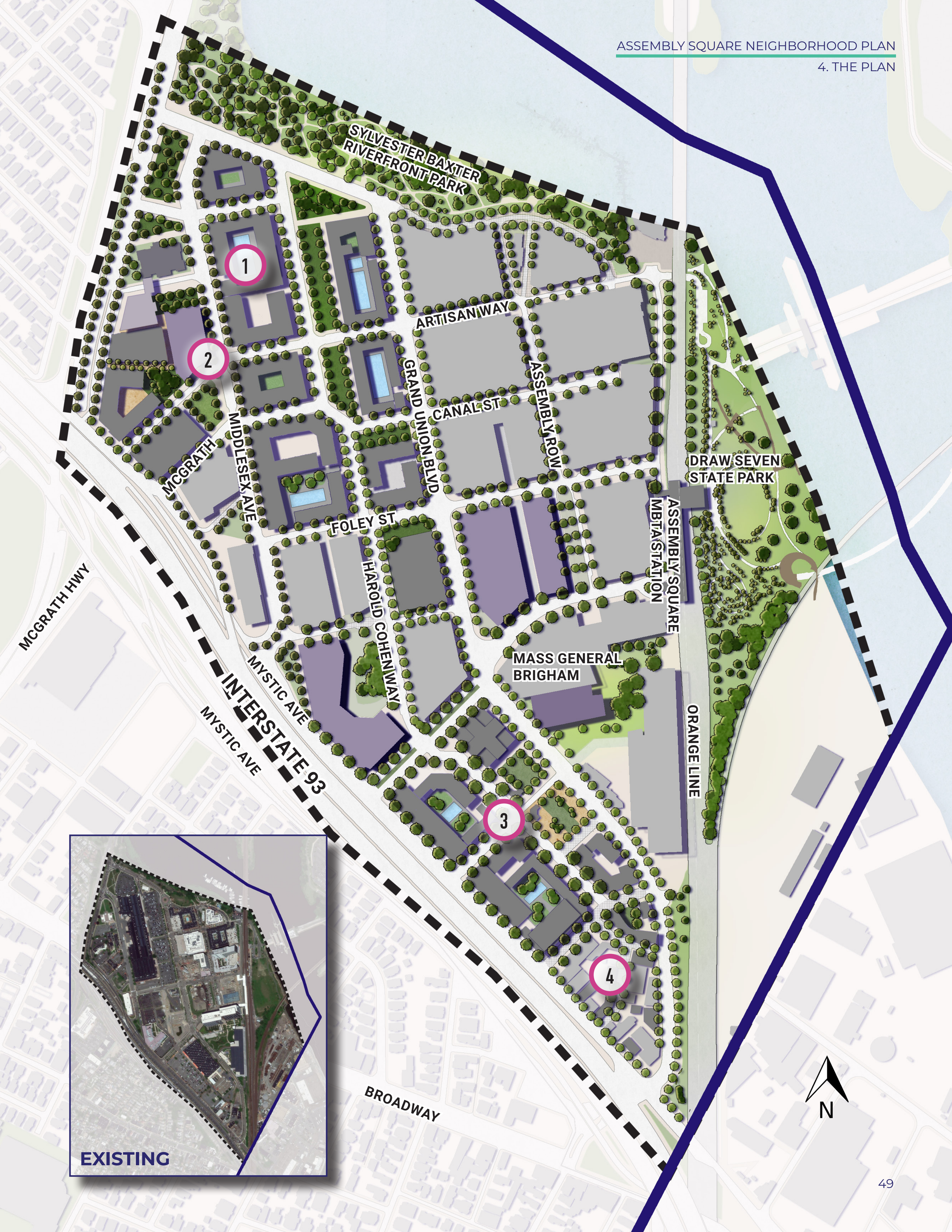
② **Middlesex Avenue Corridor**
See more on page 62

③ **Assembly Square South**
See more on page 67

④ **Assembly Point Micro-District**
See more on page 72

ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN

- ▭ City Boundary
- ⬚ Neighborhood Boundary
- ~ Primary Pedestrian Network
- ■ Proposed Buildings
- ■ Planned Building
- ■ Existing Buildings
- 🟩 Proposed Green Space
- 🟩 Existing Green Space
- ■ Plaza Space
- □ Shared Street
- ■ Blocks
- ■ River


SYLVESTER BAXTER RIVERFRONT PARK
1
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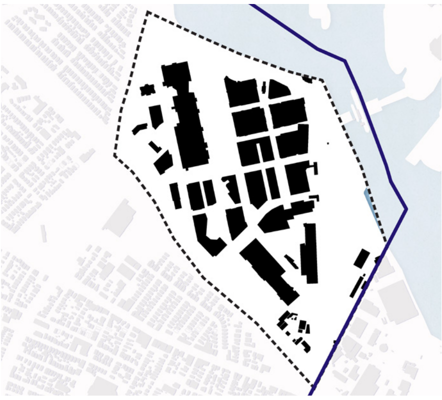
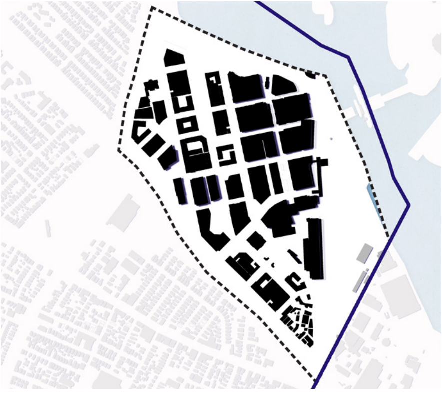
ARTISAN WAY
CANAL ST
GRAND UNION BLVD
ASSEMBLY ROW
MCGRATH
MIDDLESEX AVE
FOLEY ST
HAROLD COHEN WAY
DRAW SEVEN STATE PARK
ASSEMBLY SQUARE MBTA STATION
MASS GENERAL BRIGHAM
ORANGE LINE
MYSTIC AVE
MYSTIC AVE
INTERSTATE 93
MCGRATH HWY
BROADWAY
N
EXISTING

GENERAL PLAN CONCEPTS

The Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan imagines different character areas to meet the various and evolving needs of the neighborhood. The vision for the potential future character of office buildings, spaces, and uses, can drive policy choices for the neighborhood. The plan shows redevelopment and infill throughout the neighborhood (shown in the figure ground diagrams to the right).



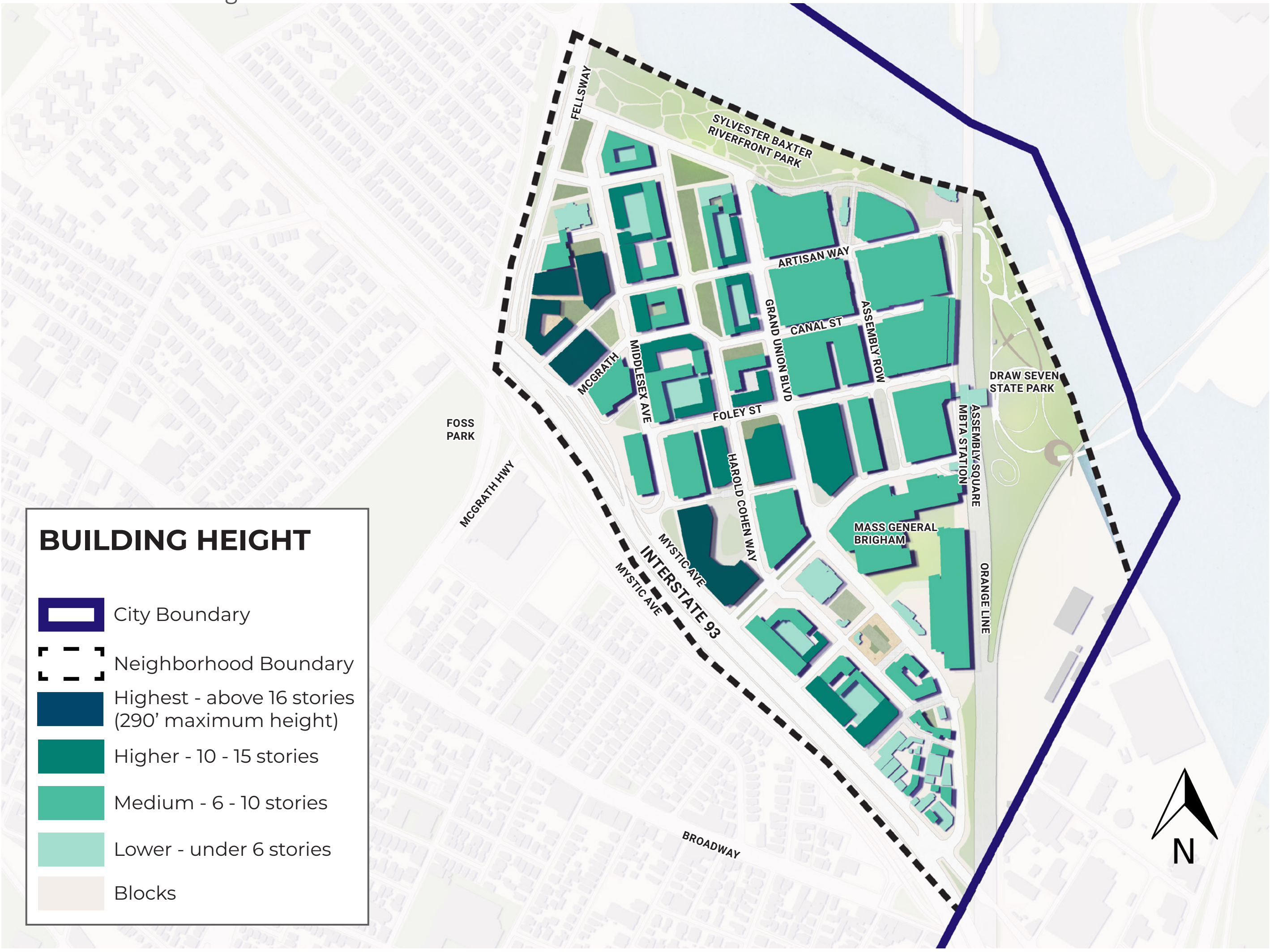
Existing Figure Ground



Proposed Figure Ground

PROPOSED BUILDING HEIGHT

The existing buildings east of Grand Union Boulevard are 6 stories or less, though there are 12-story towers in some areas. West of Grand Union Boulevard are existing single-story commercial buildings. With new development, the highest buildings (no taller than 290') - located within 500 feet of I-93- could prevent highway air pollution from penetrating further into the neighborhood. The motor vehicle corridors of Middlesex Avenue and Grand Union Boulevard would also have taller buildings, stepping down in height toward a central green space. Buildings within Assembly Point would likely have smaller footprints and remain at lower heights.


FELLSWAY
SYLVESTER BAXTER RIVERFRONT PARK
ARTISAN WAY
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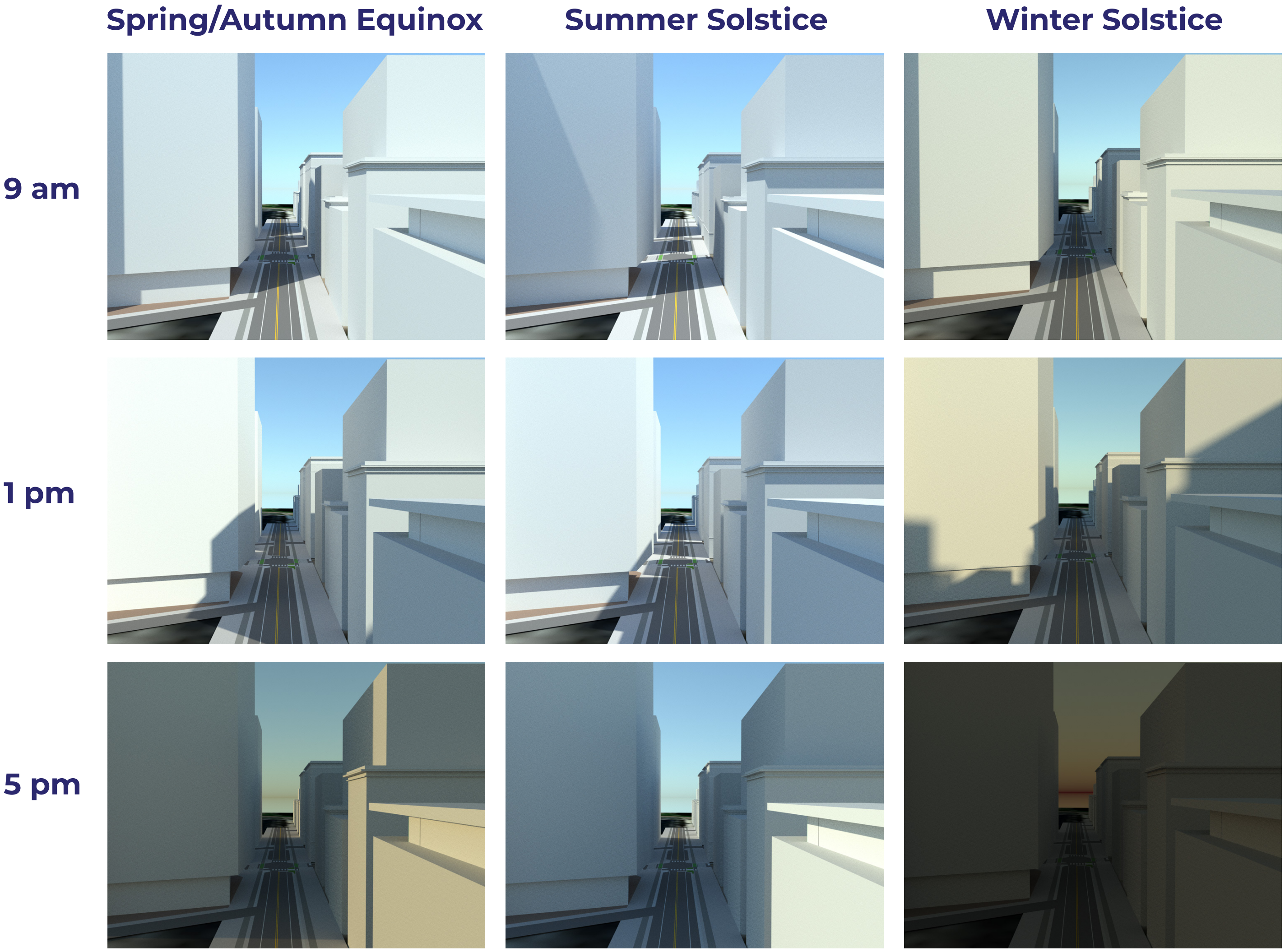
ASSEMBLY ROW
MIDDLESEX AVE
MCGRATH
FOLEY ST
HAROLD COHEN WAY
DRAW SEVEN STATE PARK
ASSEMBLY SQUARE MBTA STATION
FOSS PARK
MCGRATH HWY
MYSTIC AVE
INTERSTATE 93
MYSTIC AVE
MASS GENERAL BRIGHAM
ORANGE LINE
BROADWAY
N
BUILDING HEIGHT
City Boundary
Neighborhood Boundary
Highest - above 16 stories (290' maximum height)
Higher - 10 - 15 stories
Medium - 6 - 10 stories
Lower - under 6 stories
Blocks

Shade Study

One of the major concerns in setting appropriate possible building heights is ensuring adequate lighting at the ground level. A shade study was conducted which analyzed sample areas of Middlesex Avenue and the central civic space to determine if there was adequate sunlight throughout the year. Each location was checked daily for shortest, longest, and equal hours of sunlight.

Middlesex Avenue

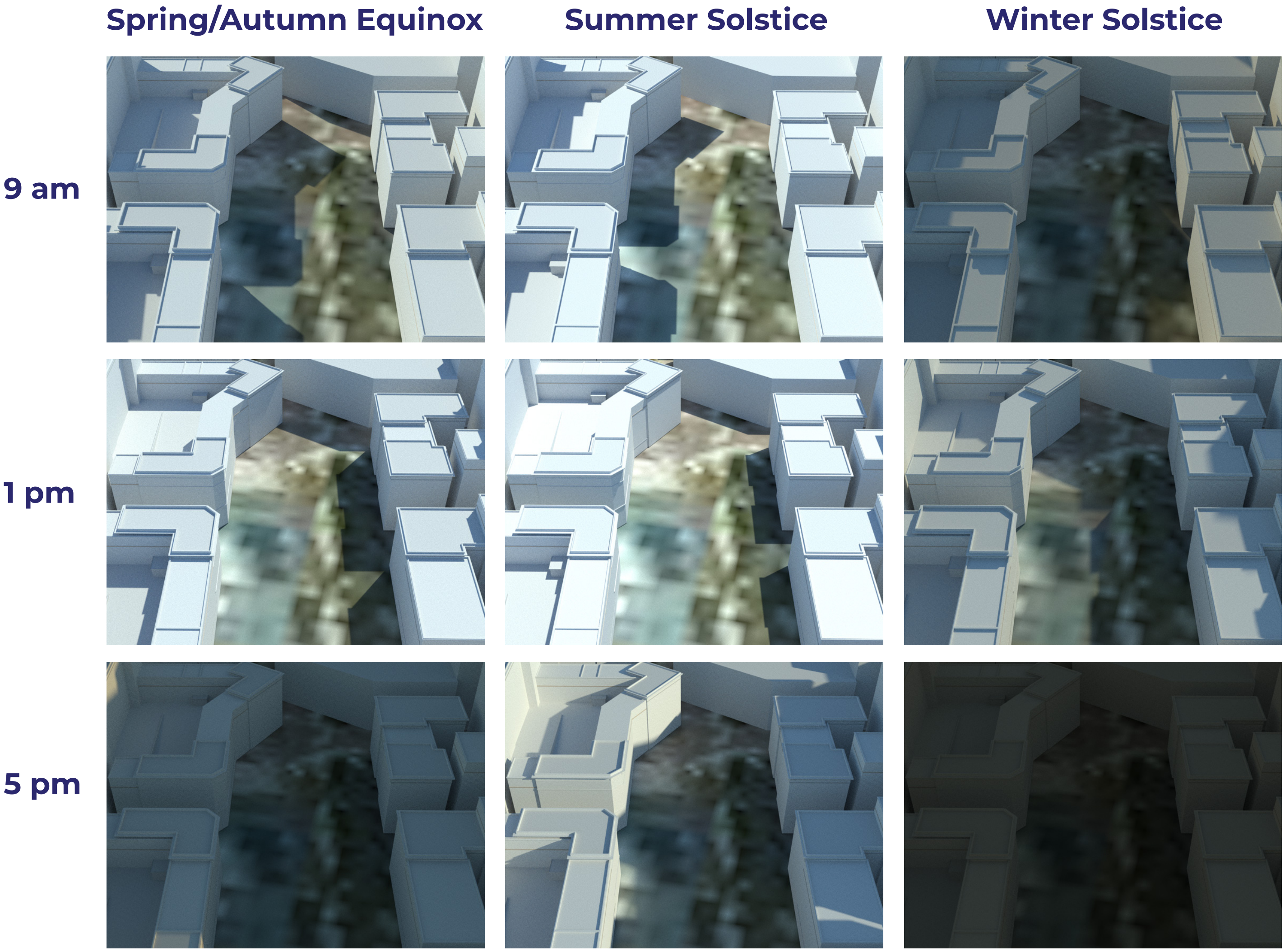
Assembly Square's neighborhood streets primarily have north–south orientation. This means that streets like Middlesex Avenue and Grand Union Boulevard can have taller buildings. The upper floors on the east side of the street receive more sun exposure in the morning; the buildings facing west get more sunlight in the afternoon; and the street level still sees sun for at least a few hours throughout the day.



Shade Analysis of Middlesex Avenue street view, looking north towards Grand Union Boulevard from where the Lincoln Technical Institute is currently located

Central Civic Space

The central civic space should be well lit throughout the day and feel open toward the sky. The buildings around the space are shorter (6 to 10 stories) and spaced farther apart across the green. The central civic space also has a north–south orientation. This location, along with the lower building height, allows for a long period of sun exposure that will let many trees and plants thrive. The east side of the central green area gets more sun exposure in the morning, and in the afternoon the west side of the park space gets more sunlight.

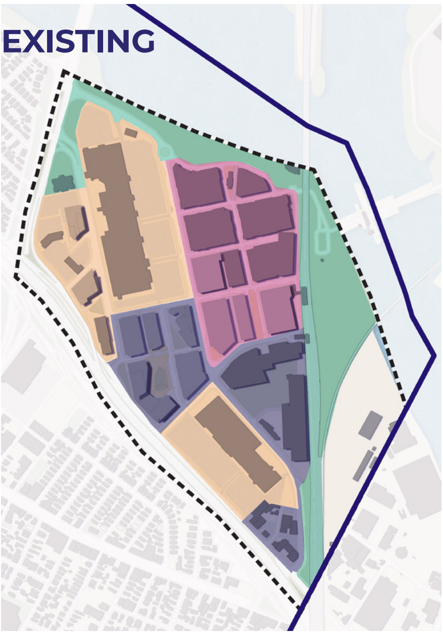


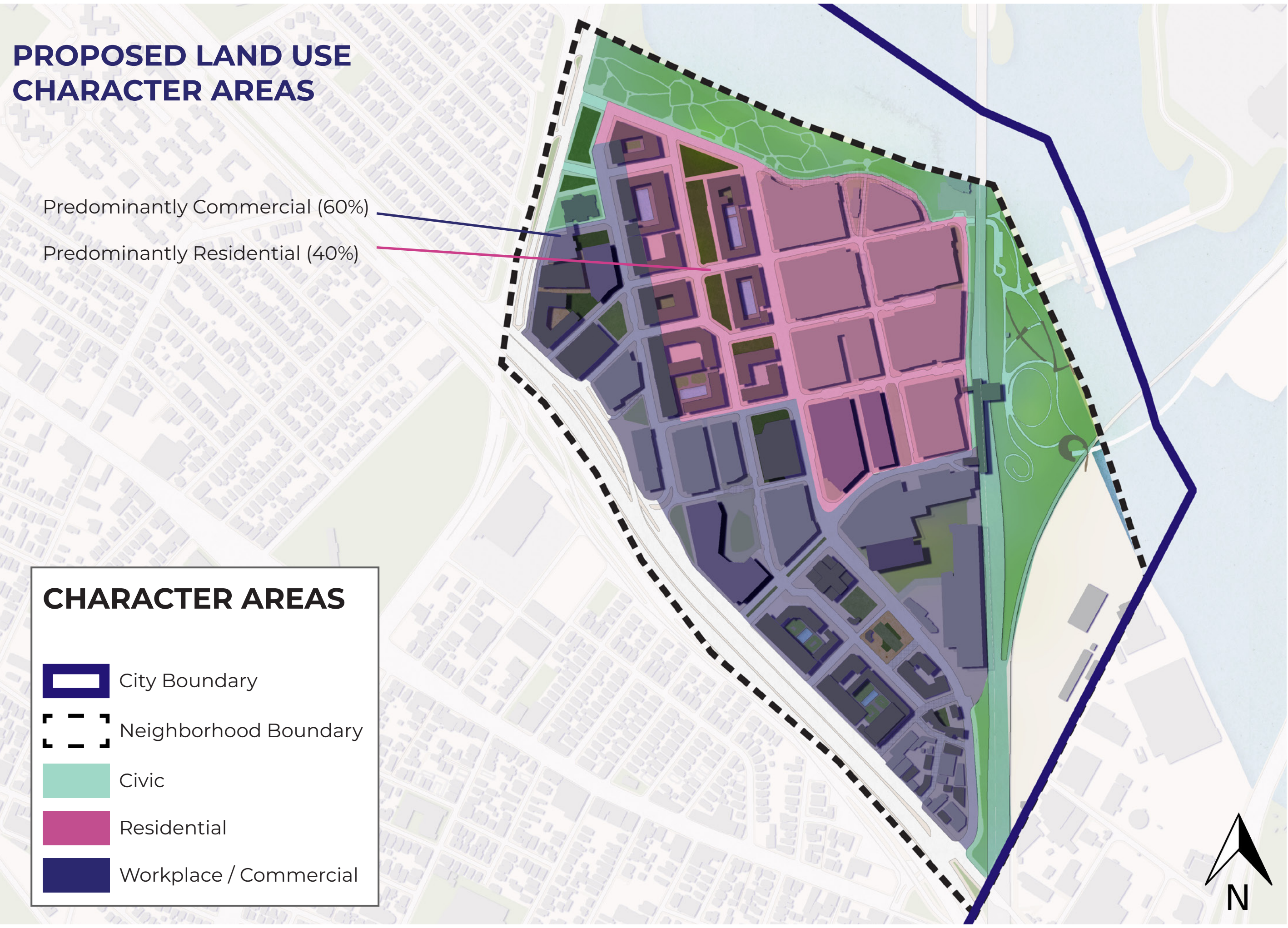
Shade Analysis of the central civic space, looking south towards Foley Street.

LAND USE CHARACTER

While Assembly Square will be mixed-use as a whole, some areas will develop a character based on the dominant land use. Currently, the neighborhood consists of the walkable mixed residential and retail character of Assembly Row, the workplace character of Mass General Brigham, and the auto-oriented Assembly Marketplace and Home Depot.

Identifying general character areas can help guide policies and zoning based on each area's needs. Informed by the need to balance tax revenues, this plan proposes that 60% of new development be workplace uses. These areas are located along Middlesex Avenue and form the built edge at I-93 to provide a buffer to the residential uses from highway noise and pollutants. Retail will often occupy the ground floors of buildings, with the upper floors varying between residences and workplaces. Residential uses should be located around new civic spaces which are located throughout the neighborhood and form a connected network to the riverfront parklands and recreation areas. The public realm is approximately 30% of the land area.


EXISTING


PROPOSED LAND USE CHARACTER AREAS

Predominantly Commercial (60%)
Predominantly Residential (40%)
CHARACTER AREAS
City Boundary
Neighborhood Boundary
Civic
Residential
Workplace / Commercial
N

CIVIC SPACES

The Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan portrays a variety of civic space types that together would allocate approximately 30% of land for public use. The various civic spaces would serve a wide range of functions and offer something for everyone, making the spaces less likely to become crowded or overused. The goal is to have enough space to maintain a healthy environment and allow for fresh air, recreation, and events. While the exact details of these spaces will change from this illustrative plan, the plan describes the following primary strategies for a connected network of neighborhood civic spaces that must be included:

1 Central Commons

The centerpiece of the master plan is the Central Commons, a chain of civic spaces linking Sylvester Baxter Riverfront Park to the Assembly Point Micro-District. The Central Commons would take different forms based on the varying character of the surroundings.

1.A A new civic park space that visually connects to the waterfront park across Grand Union Boulevard can be associated with a library, museum, or arts space plus a café.

1.B At the heart of the Assembly Marketplace is the new Assembly Central Green. New residential development is oriented around the green between Grand Union Boulevard and Middlesex Avenue and can host community events like art fairs, farmer's markets, or food truck rallies.

1.C The neighborhood park along Harold Cohen Way is approximately 1 acre of varied program areas.

1.D A tree-lined street with wide sidewalks and outdoor dining in the Assembly Square South area joins a square that may front a new civic building.

1.E In the Assembly Point micro-district, Central Commons becomes a shared street that intermittently widens into plazas for social and community events.

1.F A new firehouse on the ground floor.

1.G Existing police substation opened in 2016.

2 Sylvester Baxter Riverfront Park

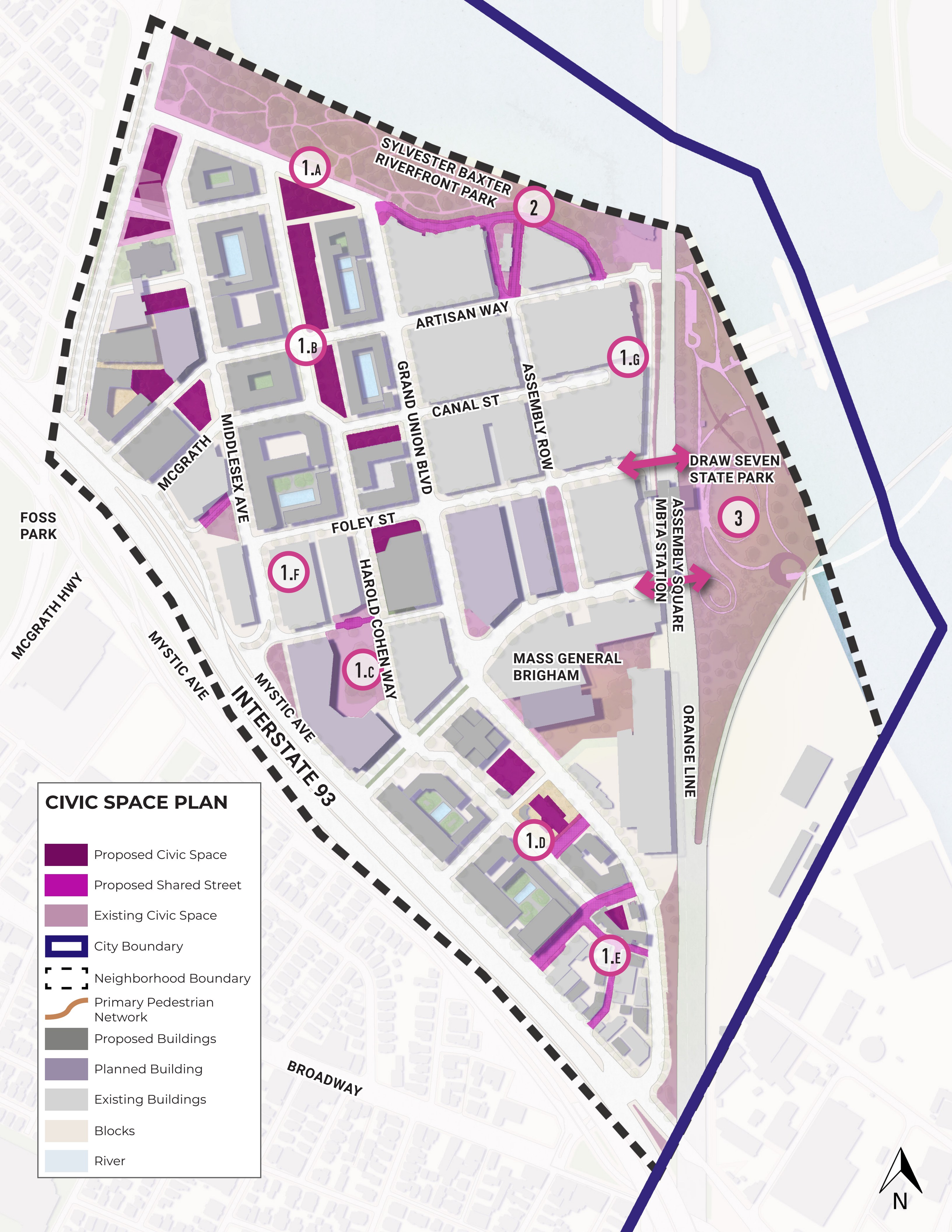
Sylvester Baxter Riverfront Park is Assembly Square's primary waterfront park and is directly adjacent to the Assembly Row development across Great River Road. The park can be expanded by shifting Grand Union Boulevard to the south to be better connected to the neighborhood by transforming a portion of Great River Road into a shared street.

3 Draw Seven State Park

The City and State are working together to update Draw Seven State Park, creating a large, modern waterfront park along the Mystic River. The park's location (across the rail lines) reduces its visibility and makes it difficult to reach from the neighborhood. The City and State could create an additional park entrance accessible from the Assembly Square MBTA Station near Foley Street or from Revolution Drive over the rail lines. This would significantly improve access to the park. These potential new entrances, combined with the Central Commons, would create a green loop through the neighborhood .

SHARED STREETS AS CIVIC SPACE

The Assembly Square neighborhood should reclaim street spaces in order to prioritize pedestrians and cyclists over the movement of motor vehicles whenever possible. This plan champions shared streets as the place for the community to take back the street as civic space. Shared streets prioritize walking over all other movement, while providing spaces for bikes and allowing vehicles limited access at low speeds. Curbless streets, pedestrian friendly surfaces, and permeable paving can reinforce the comfort of pedestrians, rather than motor vehicles. Pavers on pedestrian sidewalks should have larger sizes to allow continuous surface. These streets should be designed to adapt to different civic functions–such as closing the street for community events like farmers markets or food truck events.


SYLVESTER BAXTER RIVERFRONT PARK
1.A
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1.G
ARTISAN WAY
GRAND UNION BLVD
ASSEMBLY ROW
CANAL ST
DRAW SEVEN STATE PARK
MCGRATH
MIDDLESEX AVE
3
FOLEY ST
ASSEMBLY SQUARE MBTA STATION
FOSS PARK
1.F
HAROLD COHEN WAY
MCGRATH HWY
MASS GENERAL BRIGHAM
1.C
MYSTIC AVE
MYSTIC AVE
INTERSTATE 93
ORANGE LINE
1.D
1.E
BROADWAY
N
CIVIC SPACE PLAN
Proposed Civic Space
Proposed Shared Street
Existing Civic Space
City Boundary
Neighborhood Boundary
Primary Pedestrian Network
Proposed Buildings
Planned Building
Existing Buildings
Blocks
River

UTILITIES AND STORMWATER

The first step in developing a utilities infrastructure master plan is to identify and assess the condition and capacity of the existing utilities and infrastructure. This assessment must be done in relation to existing buildings and loads that are already served by the utilities. As-built drawings, other documents, physical assessments on site, and coordination with the Somerville Department of Infrastructure and Asset Management (IAM) and Department of Public Works (DPW) are all useful ways to gather this information. Research required for an accurate assessment should not be limited to review of existing documents, records, and discussions. On-site surveys, cross-checking information through analysis, videotaping, and other tools applicable to the specific utility that is being evaluated should also be considered. Depending on the situation, determining existing loads could require some analytical effort. This might include computer modeling (pipe flow analysis), calculations and estimations based on industry guidelines and standard practices.

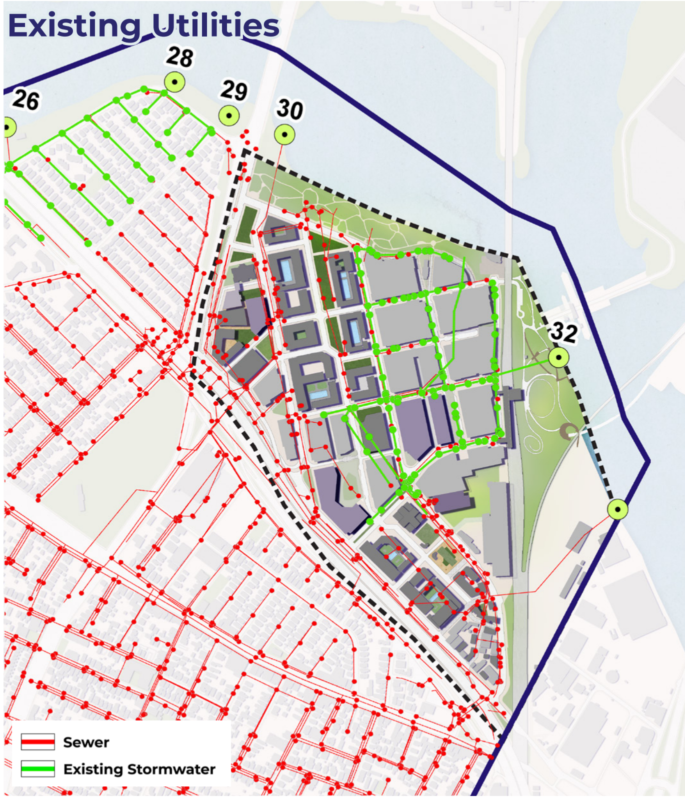
North Grand Union Boulevard

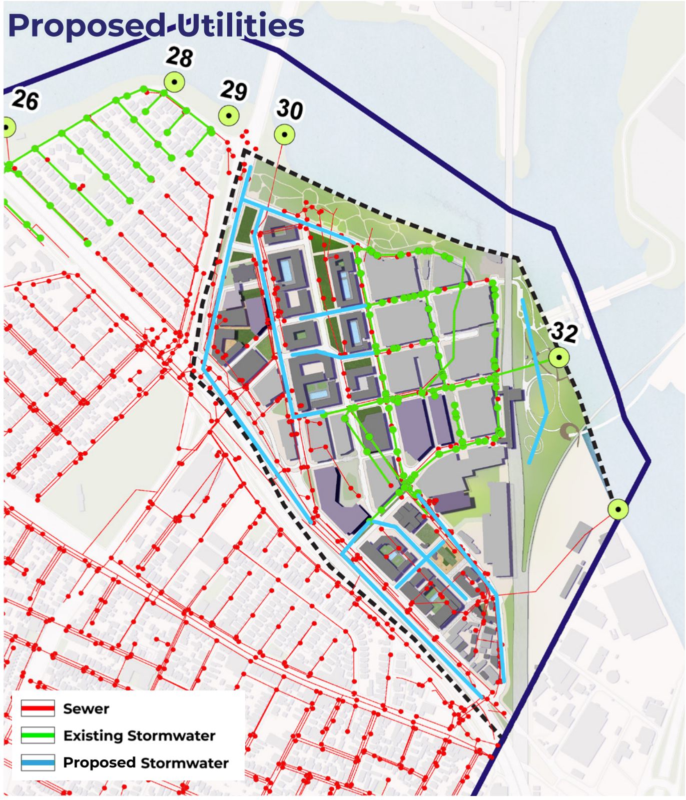
Grand Union Boulevard

South Grand Union Boulevard

	ESTIMATED SEWER FLOWS GENERATED (GPD)	USAGE BREAKDOWN ASSUMPTIONS
OFFICE (75 GPD/1,000 SF)	345,000	OFFICE = 4,600,000 SF
RETAIL (50 GPD/1,000 SF)	77,500	RETAIL = 1,550,000 SF
RESIDENTIAL (110 GPD/BEDROOM)	550,000	RESIDENTIAL = 2,500 UNITS
TOTAL (GPD)	972,500	

The next step involves evaluating the impact of each potential building addition, deletion, or renovation on each of the affected utilities. Based on estimated daily sewer flows laid out in the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) State Environmental Code (310 CMR 15.00), we were able to calculate an approximate daily increase that will need to be accounted for based on the development option chosen. The proposed development, as shown in this illustrative plan, will generate approximately 972,500 gallons per day (GPD) in additional sewer flow. As with sewer, the water requirements for each use will need to be further analyzed by a licensed plumbing engineer, and the capacity of the existing infrastructure will need to be analyzed in coordination with the Somerville DPW to determine if mains need to be replaced, upgraded, or added in certain locations. In terms of stormwater drainage, according to MassDEP regulations this area will not allow for infiltration in any extent due to formerly polluted soils, etc. Therefore, proposed stormwater piping will likely be required to convey roof and pavement runoff from these areas into the municipal pipe network to be discharged elsewhere.


Existing Utilities
26
28
29
30
32
🟥 Sewer
🟩 Existing Stormwater


Proposed Utilities
26
28
29
30
32
🟥 Sewer
🟩 Existing Stormwater
🟦 Proposed Stormwater

UTILITIES

Utilities stormwater considerations include low impact development (LID) techniques, utilizing best management practices, underground infiltration systems, porous surfaces, and bioswales (a shallow, landscaped ditch that collects and filters stormwater runoff). All of these methods will be considered in the proposed stormwater management plan.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

- Stormwater infiltration is not allowed due to MassDEP requirements.

CELLULAR ACCESS

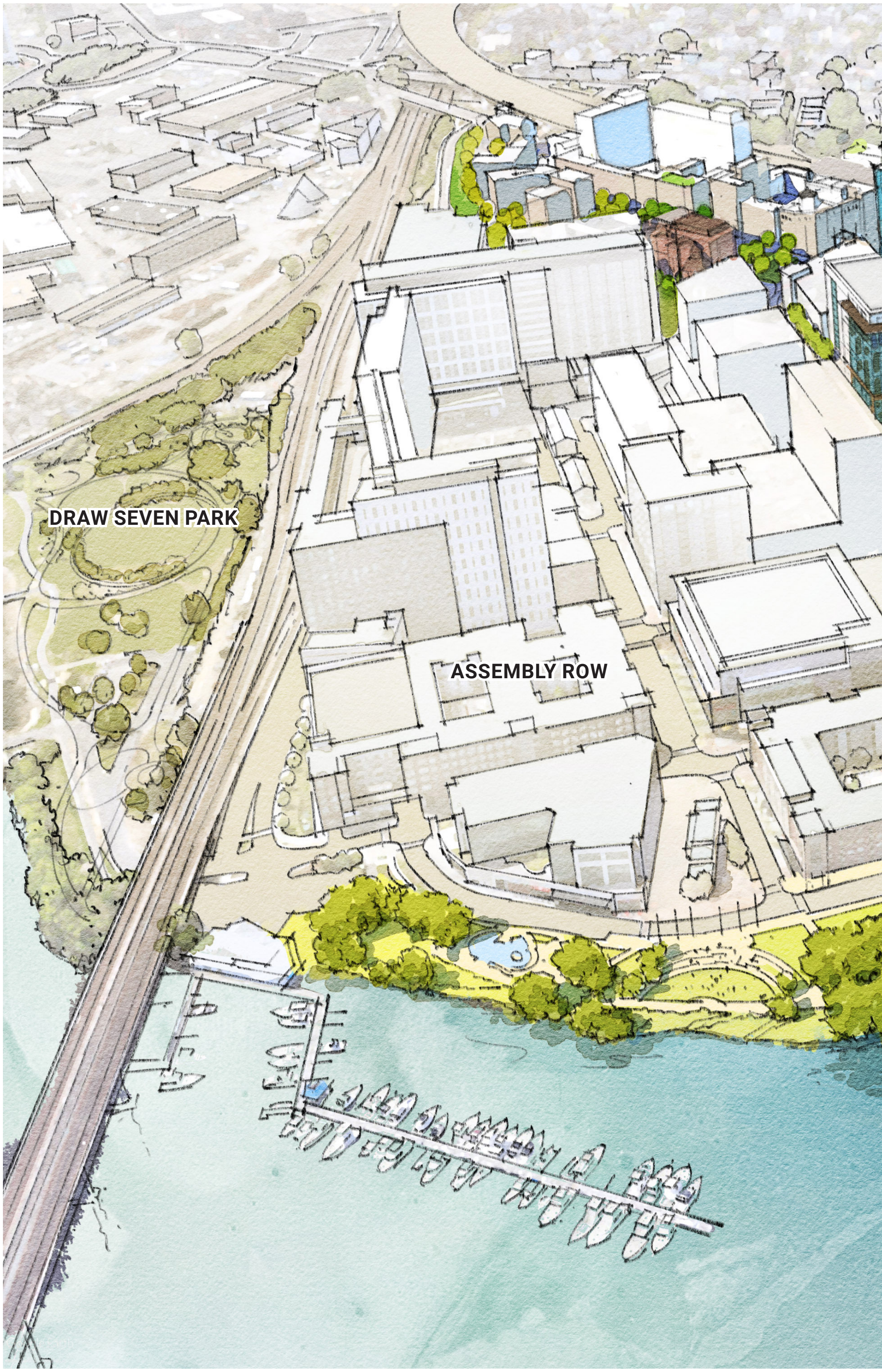
Cellular communication technologies experienced rapid growth in the last two decades. Cellular infrastructure are essential services for a community. The planning and optimization of broadband cellular access including coverage planning, power optimization, and channel assignment should be investigated further as the Assembly Square neighborhood grows and expands.

ASSEMBLY MARKETPLACE

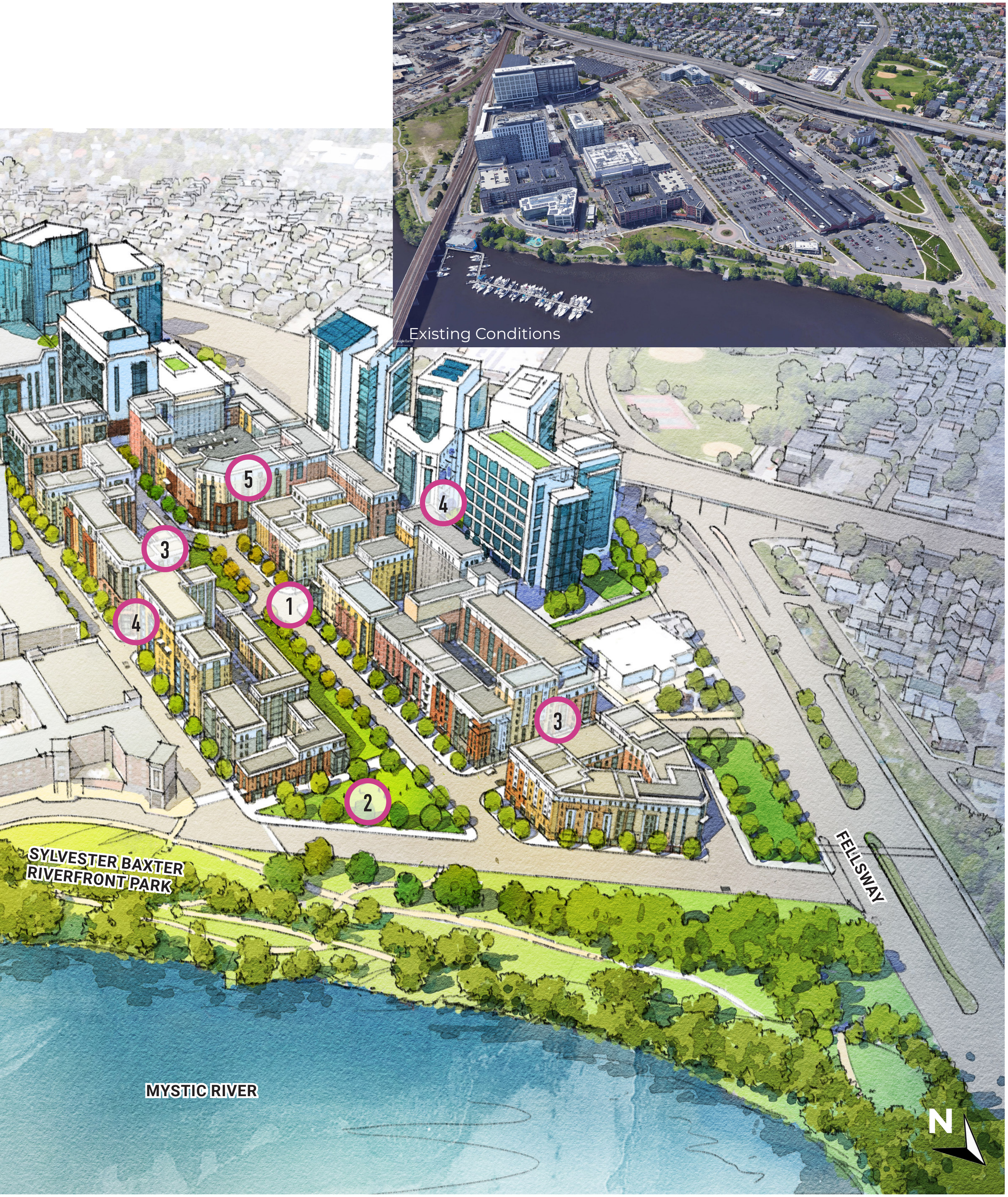
MARKETPLACE REDEVELOPMENT

The large retail building fronted by surface parking of Assembly Marketplace represents a large redevelopment opportunity in the neighborhood. The vision for the future extends the mixed-use residential character from the east side of Grand Union Boulevard. An interconnected network of small streets would create walkable blocks with a series of civic spaces in the heart of the neighborhood. Mid-rise buildings fronting the central green and shared streets would transition to larger buildings along Grand Union Boulevard and Middlesex Avenue.

1. *Public civic spaces would form the heart of the neighborhood and create space for community events.*
2. *A naturalistic park could connect with an expanded Sylvester Baxter Riverfront Park and bring nature into the neighborhood.*
3. *A network of small, walkable blocks would create a pedestrian-friendly district.*
4. *Along the wider streets, buildings would have a denser character, rising approximately 12 to 18 stories and creating a 2:1 ratio of height to width.*
5. *Buildings around the central green space would be 6 to 10 stories and ideally create a 1:3 ratio of height to width.*



Proposed Redevelopment


Existing Conditions
5
4
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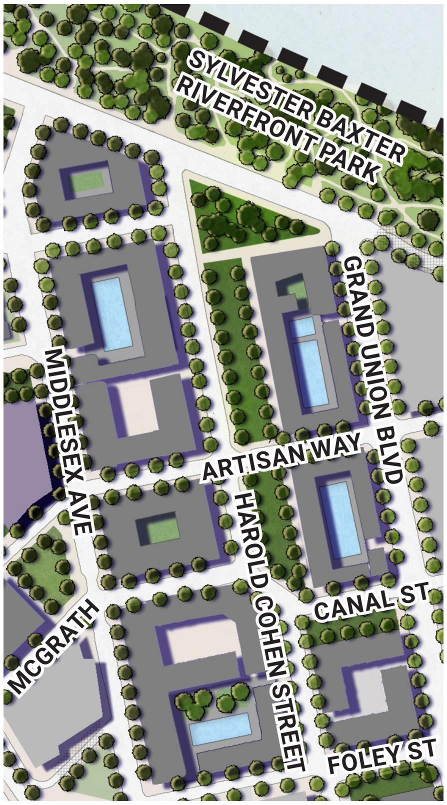
SYLVESTER BAXTER RIVERFRONT PARK
FELLSWAY
MYSTIC RIVER
N

ASSEMBLY CENTRAL GREEN

The vision for the Assembly Marketplace makes civic space central to the neighborhood with a series of formal spaces that run through the middle of the blocks. The plan creates a series of distinct spaces with unique character and carefully curated views, inviting people to continue along to "see what's around the next corner." Commercial ground floors and residential upper floors would look out onto these civic spaces.

The block sizes in Assembly Marketplace are smaller than those on the other side of Grand Union Boulevard. This creates a neighborhood form reminiscent of older neighborhoods within Somerville. Each street would maintain its primary cardinal direction of north to south or east to west, keeping the area easy to navigate.

Some blocks may be slightly larger to accommodate parking garages that are lined on all sides by habitable buildings with doors and windows facing the streets.

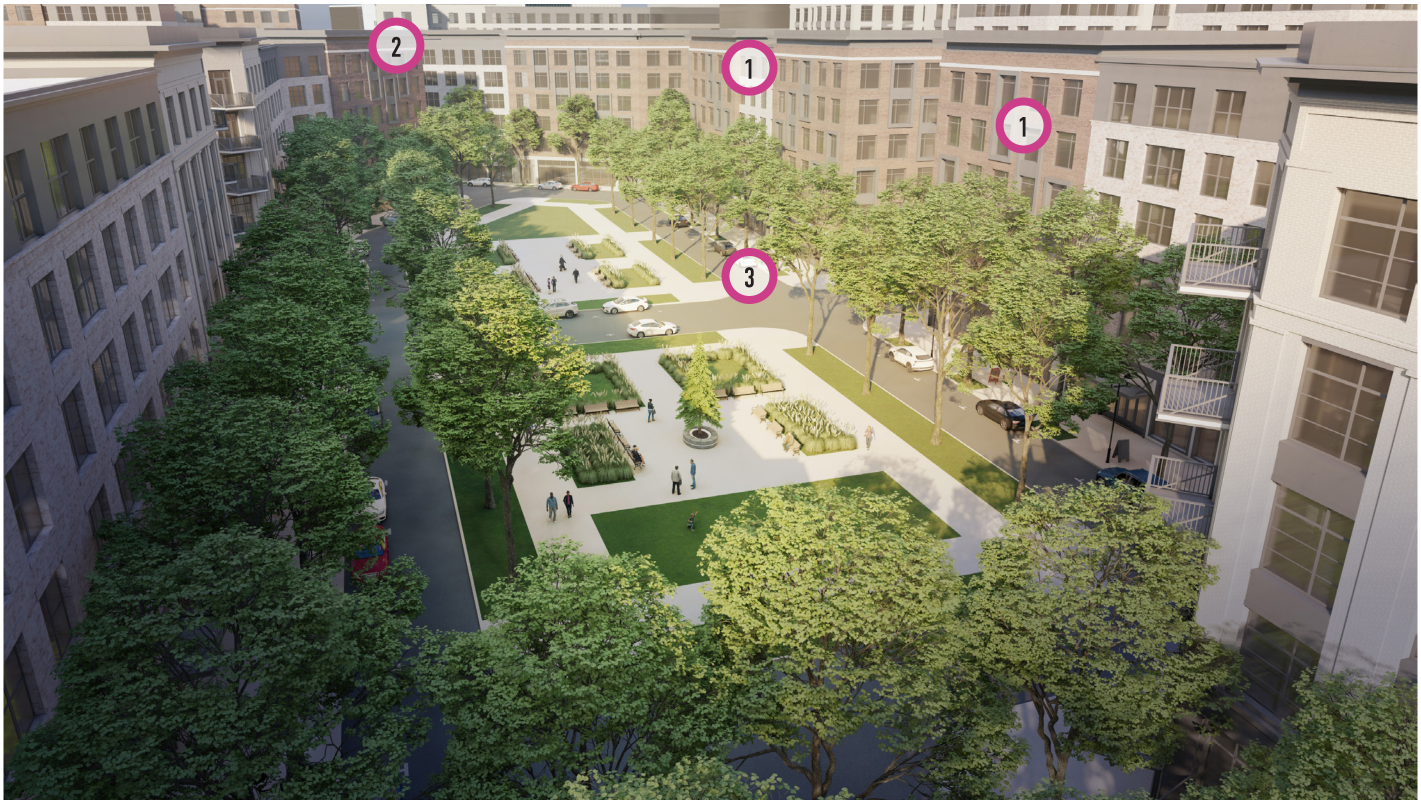


Illustrative Plan

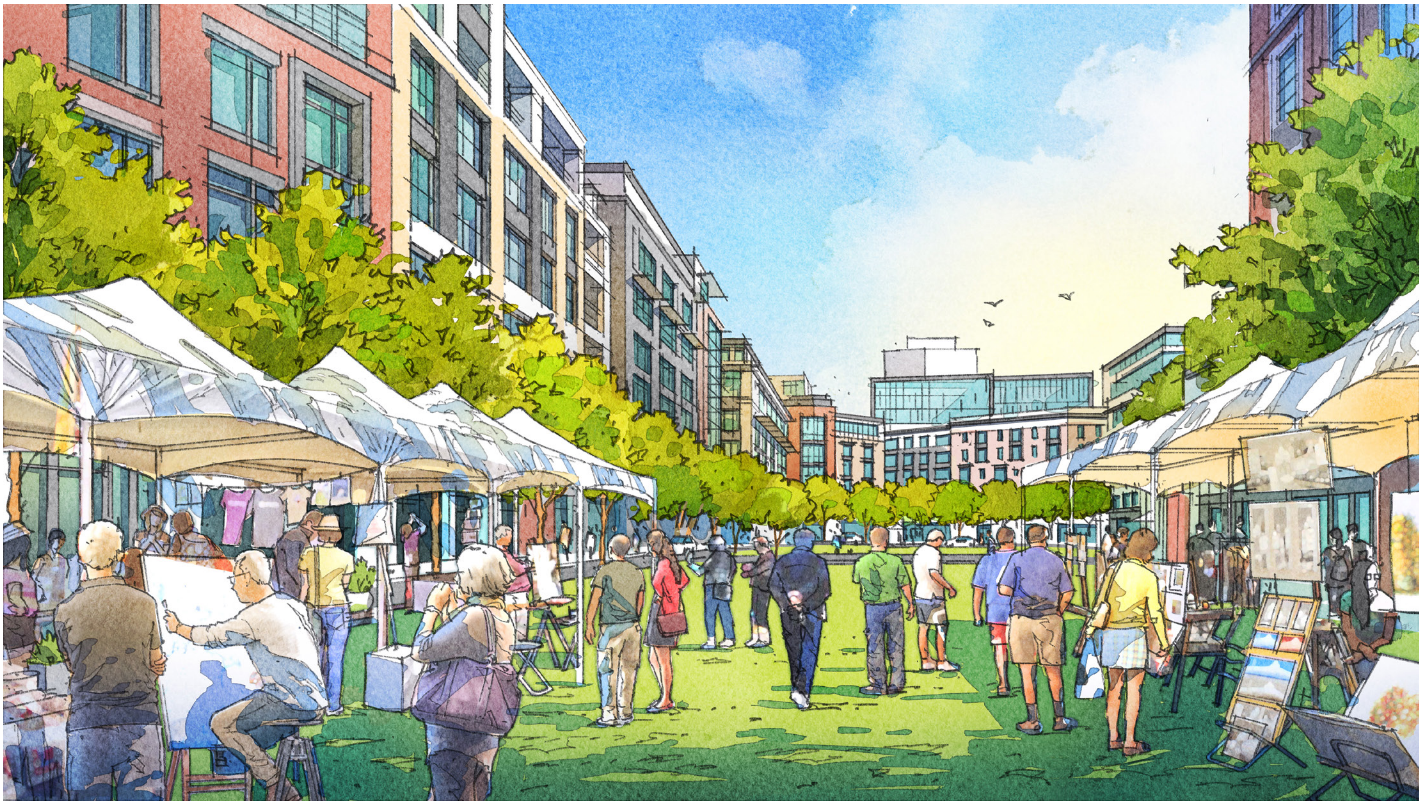
① Buildings with shops and housing lining the street

② Well-placed angled streets make the area feel more relaxed and create unique spaces

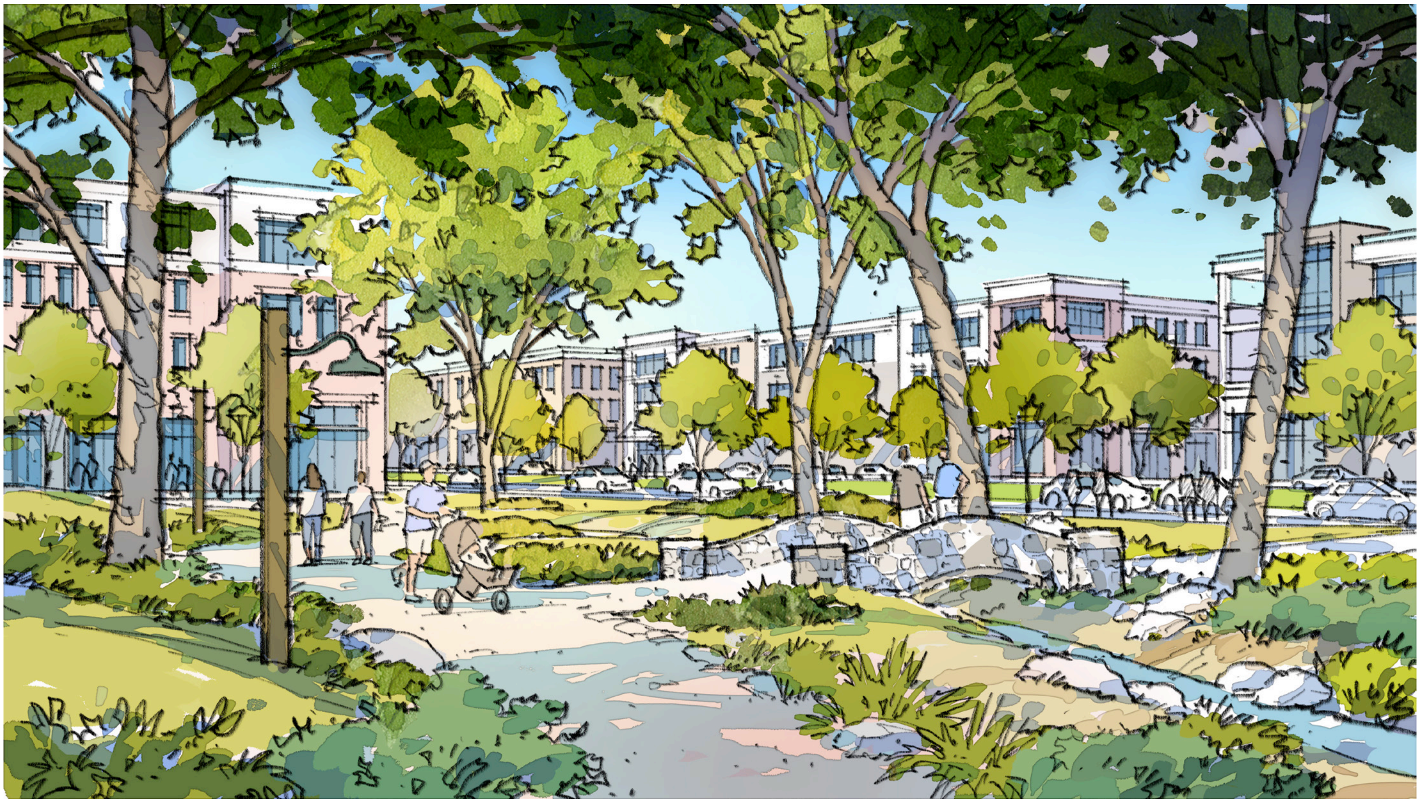
③ Shared street along the Central Green



Assembly Central Green illustrated as a large plaza with an additional shared street



Civic spaces along the Central Commons would vary in character and function. Some could be more paved and formal, and others as open and casual, allowing flexibility for events such as farmer's markets and art fairs. This image shows a section of Assembly Central Green as it opens up to larger green park civic spaces at the center of the neighborhood.



Other civic spaces are larger and more natural, creating a refuge from the bustling activity of the adjacent urbanism. This image shows an extension of Sylvester Baxter Riverfront Park that connects it to the neighborhood.

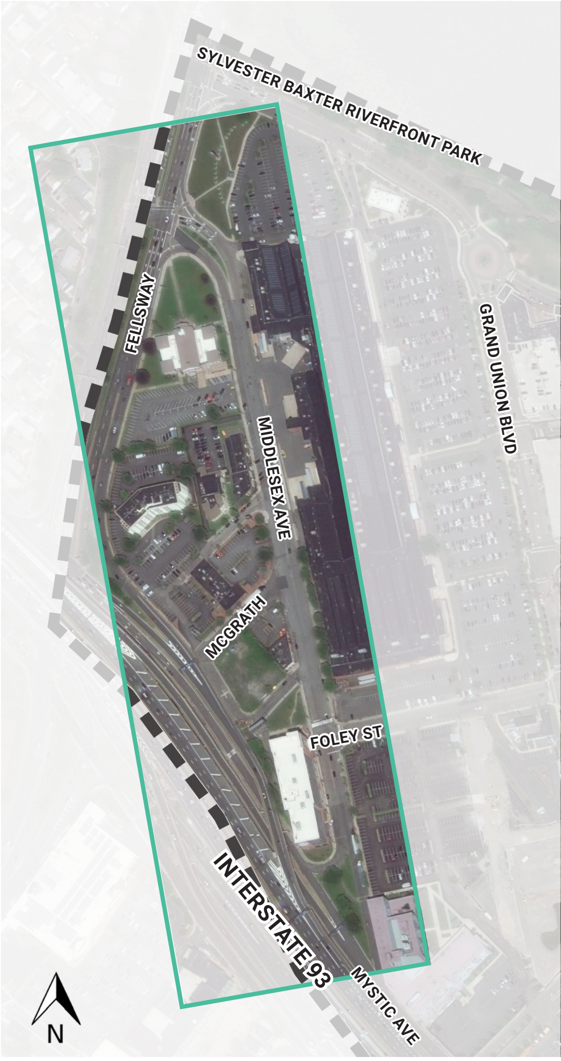
MIDDLESEX AVENUE CORRIDOR

Middlesex Avenue is in the western portion of the Assembly Square neighborhood and is a critical connection between Fellsway and Mystic Avenue. Mystic Avenue and the elevated I-93 viaduct form the western edge of the area and create a barrier to surrounding neighborhoods.

Earlier plans for the neighborhood focused on large parcels located east of Middlesex Avenue. Large parcels mean fewer owners, making it easier to carry out the broad changes proposed. In the decades since these earlier plans were made, Assembly Square has successfully evolved and is attracting new residents, workers, visitors—and attention from developers. The smaller parcels located along the western side of Middlesex Avenue are now the sites of several proposed projects for office, lab, and research and development space. This corridor is ideally positioned to become the premier location for life sciences in the city.

The Corridor Today

The eastern side of Middlesex Avenue is lined with Assembly Marketplace's back of house, a large blank wall stretching over 1,000 feet that prevents the excitement of Assembly Row from spilling over to Middlesex Avenue. Smaller parcels on the western side have a mix of parking lots and buildings with various uses. Several small streets intersect with Middlesex Avenue but offer little connectivity because they end at the interstate. The corridor's northern end is the site of Somerville's District Court building. The street reflects its industrial character with a wide stretch of unmarked pavement, including wide lanes, no street trees, intermittent sidewalks and limited crosswalks. The Middlesex Avenue corridor can look to Assembly Row for ideas to inspire the evolution..



Aerial image of the Middlesex Avenue corridor today

The Middlesex Avenue Corridor today

① Projects in the Works

Upcoming projects along Middlesex Avenue, including 5 Middlesex, 74 Middlesex, and 120 Middlesex, may bring hundreds of thousands of square feet of office, lab, and research and development space to the neighborhood.

② Re-Imagining Middlesex Avenue as a "Complete Street"

Middlesex Avenue could be transformed into a great urban street with wide sidewalks, regularly spaced street trees, cycle tracks, and on-street parking. This would allow a wide range of mobility options while also making it possible for activities within the buildings to spill out onto and enliven the sidewalks.

③ A Premier Research Corridor

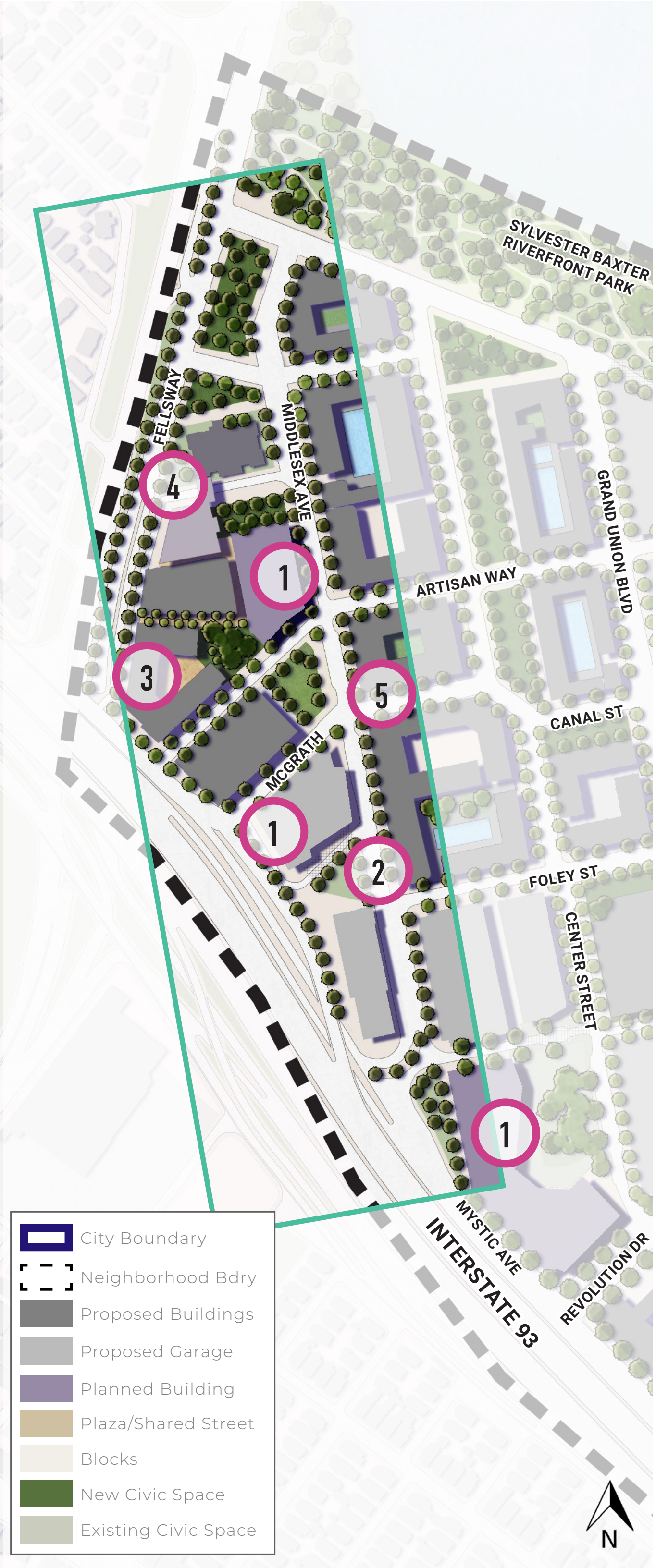
Taller buildings housing office, lab, and research and development space would be located closest to the interstate, gradually decreasing in height toward the center of the neighborhood.

④ Courthouse Transformation Options

The Somerville District Court building is an existing civic use in the neighborhood, and its future is not yet determined. Options could include maintaining the current building, expanding the current building, or relocating the courthouse to a different part of the city.

⑤ New Connections

The neighborhood's east–west streets would extend westward past Grand Union Boulevard, creating new blocks where Assembly Marketplace is currently located. This would connect the Middlesex Avenue corridor to the rest of the neighborhood.


SYLVESTER BAXTER RIVERFRONT PARK
FELLSWAY
MIDDLESEX AVE
GRAND UNION BLVD
ARTISAN WAY
CANAL ST
MCGRATH
FOLEY ST
CENTER STREET
MYSTIC AVE
INTERSTATE 93
REVOLUTION DR
4
1
3
5
1
2
1
N
City Boundary
Neighborhood Bdry
Proposed Buildings
Proposed Garage
Planned Building
Plaza/Shared Street
Blocks
New Civic Space
Existing Civic Space

Illustrative plan showing the envisioned future of the Middlesex Avenue Corridor

A Growing Premiere Research Corridor

The 2000 Assembly Square Planning Study envisioned that the main use in the district would be office with research and development space and active retail at the street level. The new plan repeats that idea and recommends changes to further support a mix of uses uses, particularly along the Middlesex Avenue Corridor.

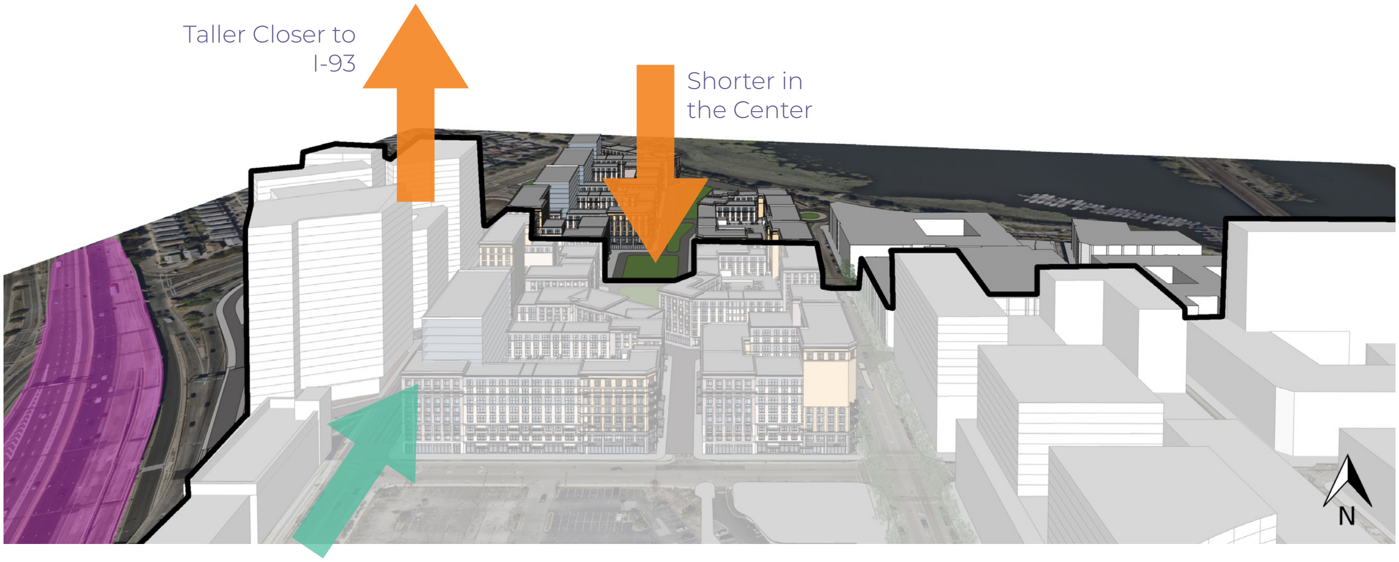
Middlesex Avenue properties are developing. That was largely driven by the region's demand for life science lab and office space over the past few years. Two large mixed-use projects have completed construction and others are under review. Each proposal includes a large expanse of office, research, and lab space with building heights of up to 275 feet.

The corridor has relatively good access with connections to I-93, Fellsway, and Mystic Avenue, and it's only a 10-minute walk from the Assembly MBTA Station. Proximity to the interstate brings noise and air pollution, making the area west of Middlesex Avenue less suitable for residential uses and green space. During the public design charrette, participants frequently mentioned wanting taller buildings closer to I-93 to create a "wall of buildings" to mitigate noise and air pollution.

Taller permitted building heights closer to I-93 can accommodate modern office, research, and lab space with greater floor-to-floor heights. The existing Assembly Square zoning regulates building height based on its distance from the Assembly MBTA Station entrances. With a distance of over 1,000 feet from a station entrance, building height is limited to 125 feet, which would accommodate up to 8 stories for office, lab, and research and development space within this corridor.

A more nuanced approach to height regulations is needed. The entire neighborhood is within walking distance of the Assembly Square MBTA Station, and there is a desire for taller buildings within 500 feet of the highway. Allowing taller buildings along Middlesex Avenue would attract growing industries to relocate here, increasing the overall tax base while preserving other areas within the neighborhood for residential use. The Middlesex Avenue Corridor could permit buildings of up to 18 stories on the western side and 12 to 15 stories on the eastern side, tapering down to 6 to 12 stories along the Central Commons.

The ground floors of these buildings should have shops, amenities, and businesses to create an active and engaging street wall for a better pedestrian experience. Civic spaces should be open, inviting, and clearly public.

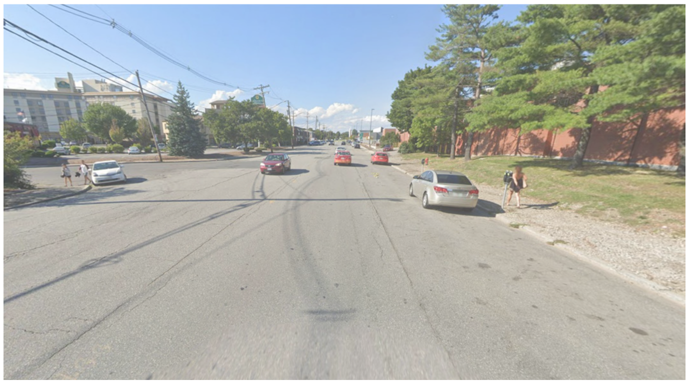


Taller buildings will be located closer to I-93 while a more intimate scale forms the residential center

Re-imagining Middlesex Avenue

As Assembly Marketplace redevelops and streets like Artisan Way are continued through, Middlesex Avenue will be better connected to the rest of the neighborhood. A new street design for the avenue that recognizes all mobility options, including walking and biking, would create desirable street addresses for businesses. The design would slow traffic speeds, provide wide sidewalks, protected bike lanes, and create safe pedestrian crossings at regular intervals.

Middlesex Avenue is imagined as a vibrant and welcoming place. The pavement would be narrowed for travel and curbside management lanes. Protected bike lanes will be located adjacent to widened sidewalks. Regularly spaced street trees, with a type of suspended pavement which prevents soil from getting compacted around tree roots allowing them to grow freely without buckling sidewalks, would add a sense of enclosure. While the specifics of the design may evolve to meet mobility needs, the key elements of a great urban street would carry through.



Middlesex Avenue today, looking north at the intersection with McGrath Highway

① Bioswales & green infrastructure

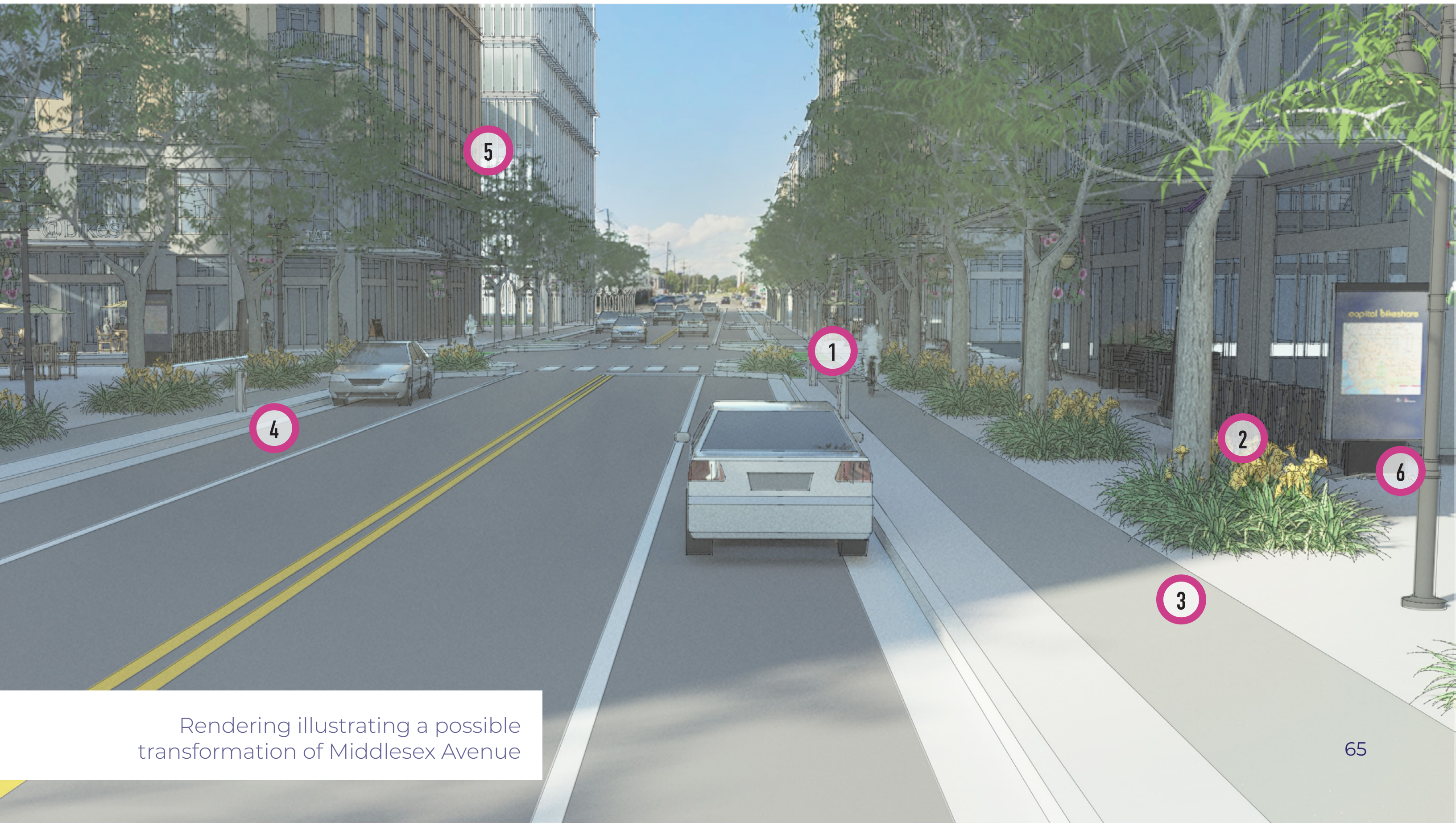
② Regularly spaced street trees

③ Raised protected bike lanes and wide sidewalks

④ Curbside management lanes with electric vehicle charging stations

⑤ Engaging street fronts

⑥ Bikeshare station



Rendering illustrating a possible transformation of Middlesex Avenue

COURTHOUSE TRANSFORMATION OPTIONS

Somerville District Court sits at the intersection of Middlesex Avenue and Fellsway, at a major entrance to Assembly Square. The courthouse building is fronted with a triangular green space and has surface parking at the back. There are several future possibilities for the courthouse site: maintain the current building, expand the current building or relocate the courthouse to a new location.

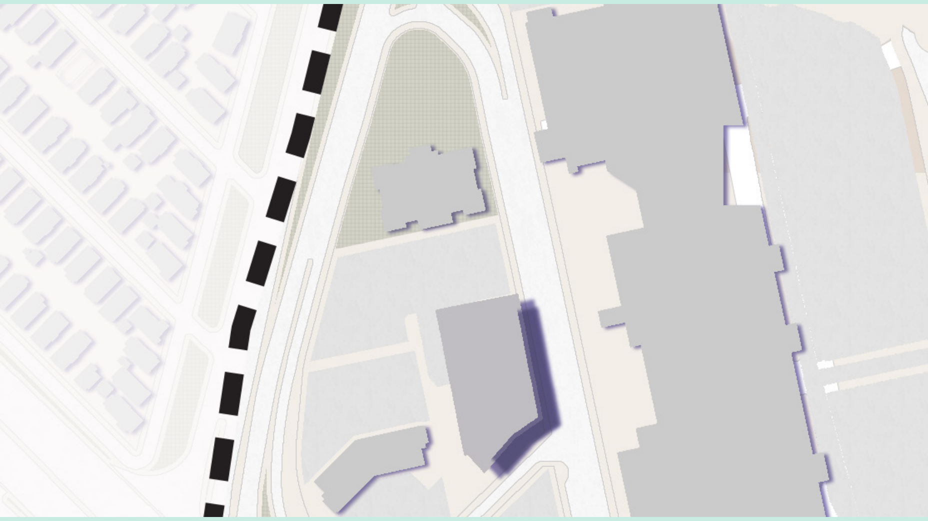
Courthouse Expansion

An addition to the courthouse could be built on a portion of the existing parking lot with the remaining parking lot area transformed into a civic space. An addition has the potential to create a more friendly frontage on Fellsway. The parking garages in future development near the site could offer designated parking spots for courthouse users.

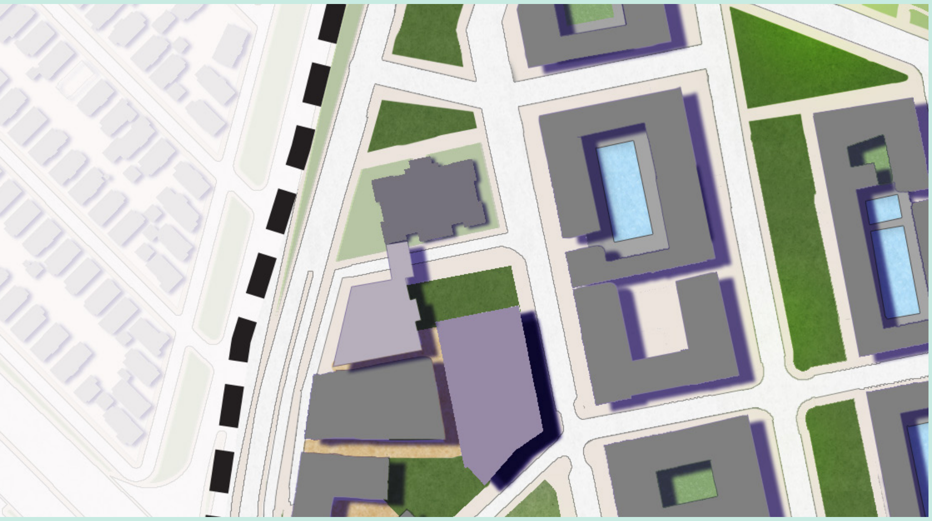
Courthouse Relocation

Relocating the courthouse would allow for a complete site redesign. The civic space could be framed by new buildings, providing a buffer to the noise and particulates from Fellsway. A new building could also create a more active street frontage.

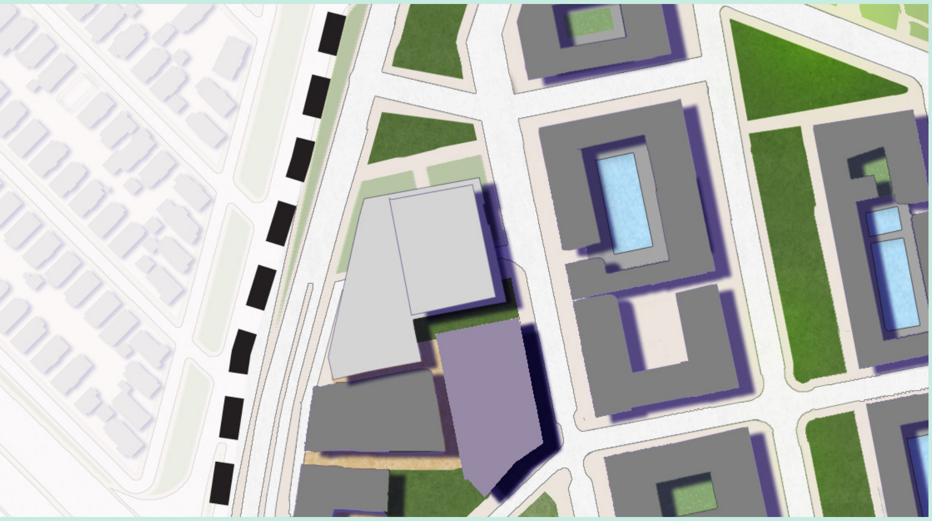
The building illustrated could also represent a new larger courthouse in this location.



Courthouse existing conditions



Courthouse expansion



Courthouse relocation or replacement

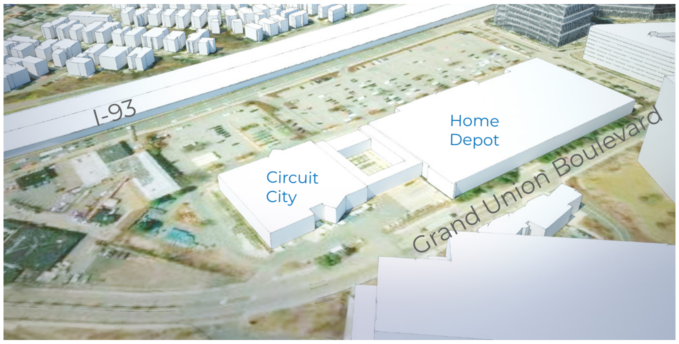
ASSEMBLY SQUARE SOUTH

Currently, the Assembly Square South area features aging, suburban, motor-vehicle-oriented development. Single-use commercial developments with large surface parking lots were designed to capitalize on visibility to motor vehicles passing by on I-93. Some buildings are currently vacant, while others are occupied by prosperous businesses. A careful phasing plan would allow portions of the area to evolve as market conditions permit.

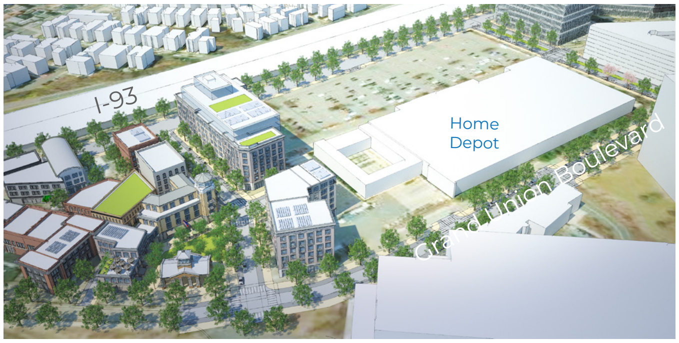
Redevelopment Ideas

As Assembly Square South redvelops, the area could become more dense and vertically mixed-use. The businesses could be more diversified to meet the daily needs of locals instead of being a regional draw accessed predominantly by motor vehicles. Multi-story buildings could bring more people to the area to live and work, increasing its vitality.

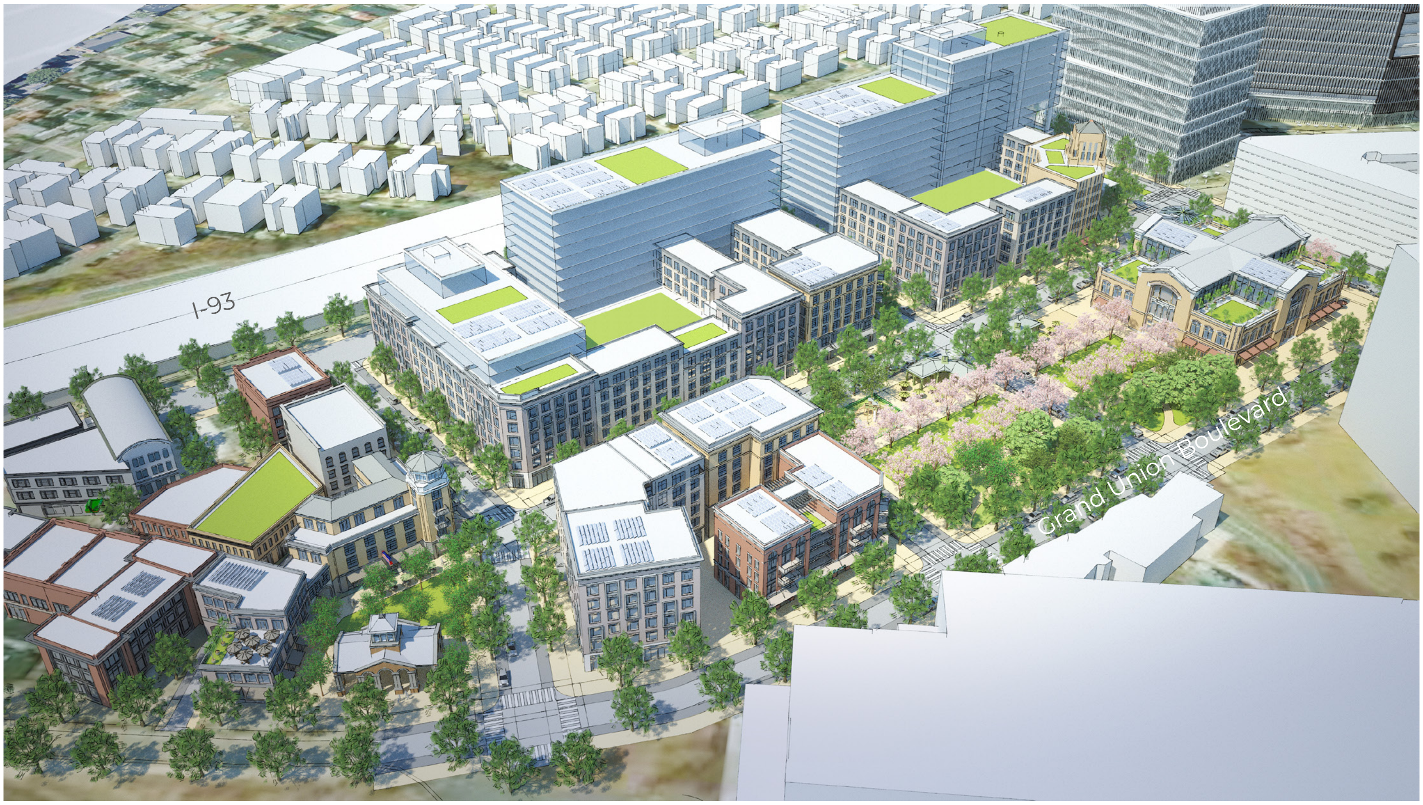
A line of taller commercial buildings could be built on the portion of the site closest to the highway. These office buildings would help to screen the rest of the



Assembly Square South, existing auto-oriented conditions



Possible phased redevelopment focused on building complete civic spaces



Assembly Square South, growing more complete over time site from motor vehicle pollution and highway noise. Office uses would also benefit from highway visibility.

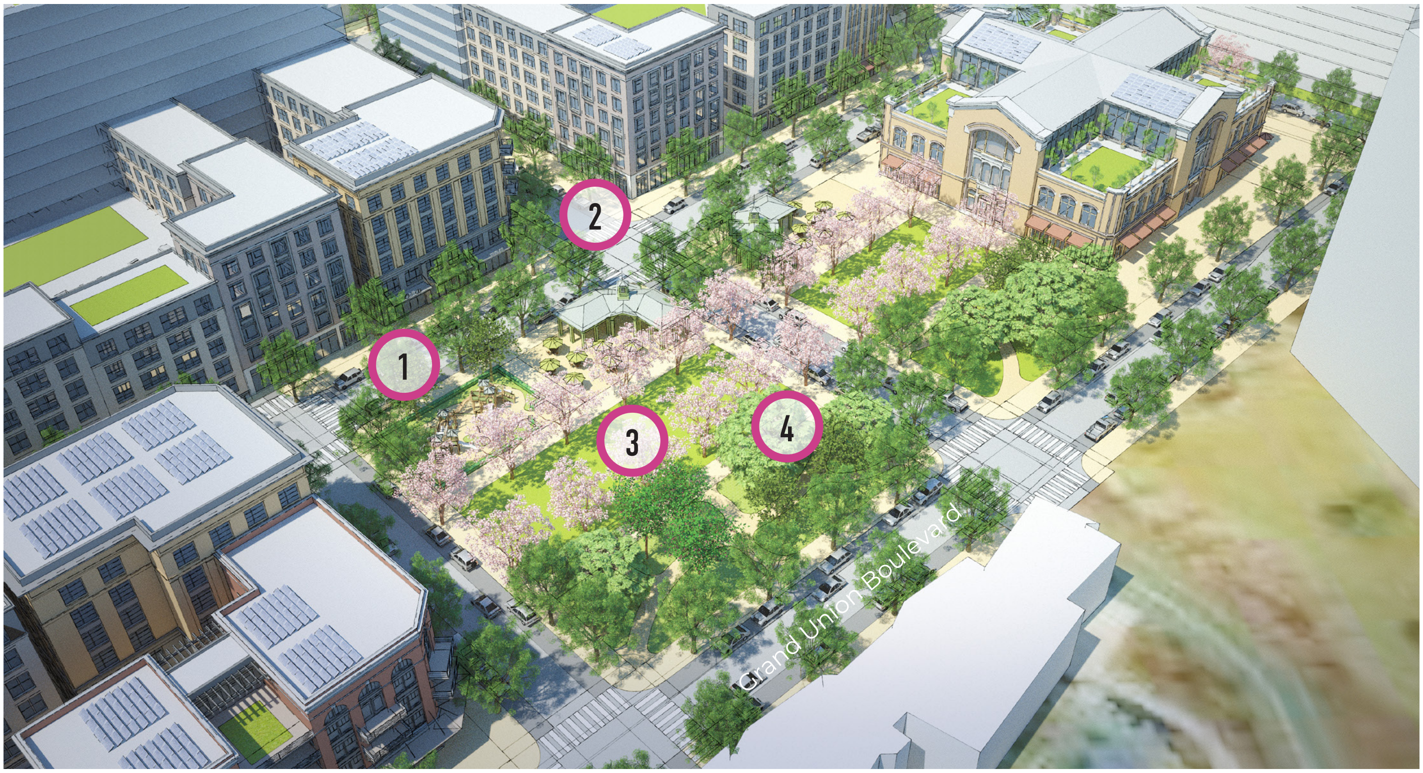
In locations farther from the Interstate and with less pollution, property use could transition to include a variety of dwellings. Residential uses could be organized around public green spaces of various sizes, shapes, and functions with retail designed to complement the walkable neighborhood.

The site plan should accommodate phased implementation as older commercial buildings become ready for redevelopment. For example, the former Circuit City site could be redeveloped first to complement the Assembly Point Micro-District while the Home Depot continues to operate.

I-93
Grand Union Boulevard

Grand Union Boulevard looking south, a focal vista

① Playground
② Café pavilion
③ Central lawn
④ Naturalistic park



Civic spaces can accommodate many activities, serving a diverse population

A focal building site which could house a museum...

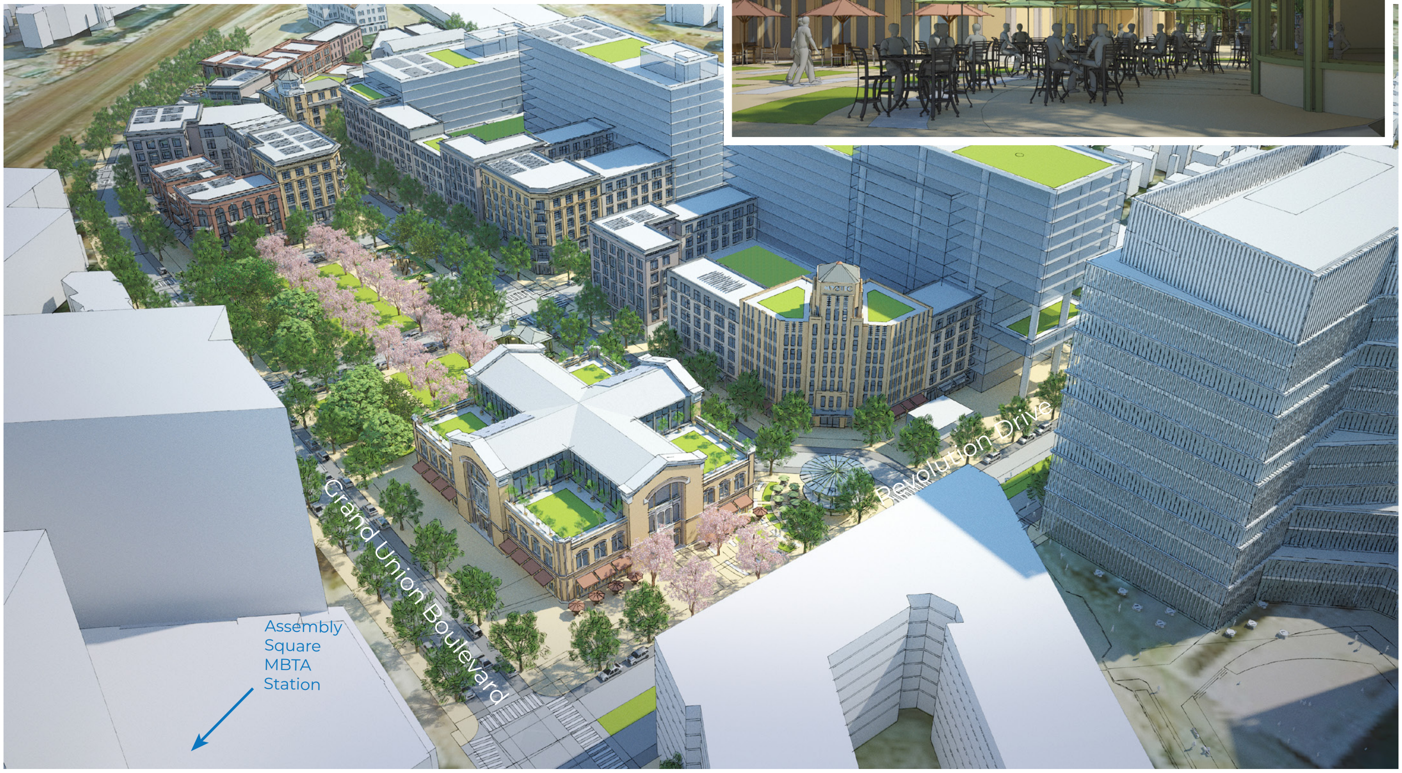
...or a performance space...

Redevelopment phasing should be organized to ensure complete two-sided streets and civic spaces.

Looking southward down Grand Union Boulevard, the view ends at the back corner of the Home Depot building. When the Home Depot site eventually redevelops, this vista could be designed to end at a signature building. The building could house many possible uses, such as a market hall, science museum, or performance space. A focal point would also enhance the attractiveness of adjacent civic spaces.

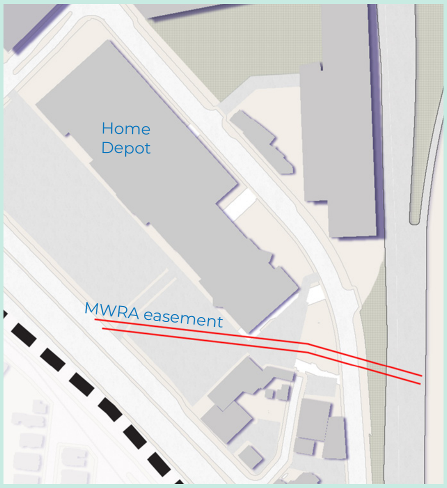
New streets and civic spaces offer an opportunity to add a great deal of green space to the large paved site. Street trees and other plantings should be used to increase pedestrian comfort. Open spaces could feature a variety of landscape treatments; formal lawns, naturalistic areas, playgrounds, tree-shaded dining terraces, and café kiosks.

A plaz
Statio



...or a market hall, or many other potential uses

ALTERNATE ASSEMBLY SOUTH



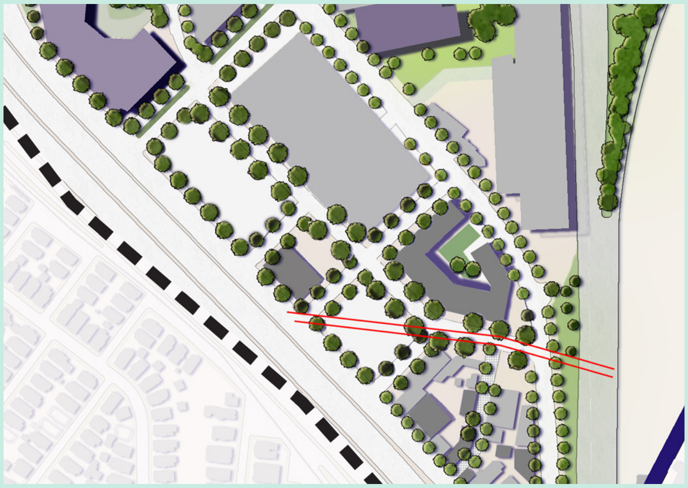
Since the charrette and release of the draft neighborhood plan, the large parcel referred to as Assembly South changed owners and serious infrastructure limitations came to light. Running diagonally under the surface parking lot is a large Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) combined sewer and stormwater line which has an easement width of twenty (20) feet. This easement cannot be under a building and must remain open and accessible for repairs at any time.

Due to this significant constraint, some modifications were necessary to the illustrative plan for this area. The following sketches show a potential alternate design that allows for phased redevelopment.

Home Depot #1976 at 2665 N. Halsted St., Chicago, IL 60614 – photo from Google maps

Initial Phase

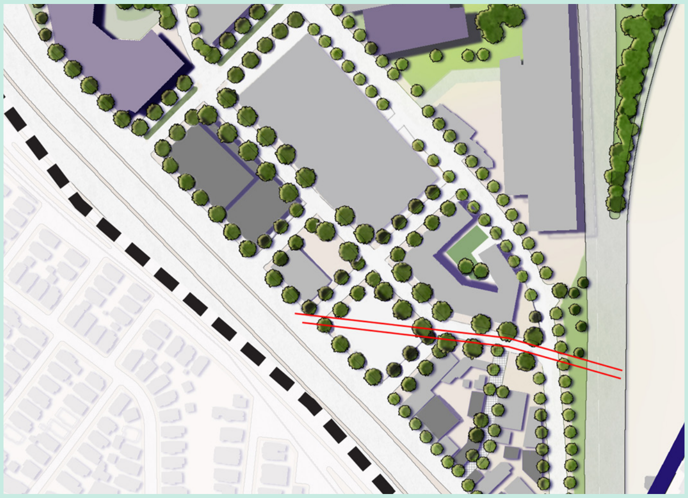
The initial phase looked at removing the vacant former Circuit City store and the Home Depot Garden Center. The Garden Center could be temporarily relocated to the parking lot in front of the current Home Depot store. This could allow the south end of the parcel to be redeveloped. This sketch shows a residential footprint, but the proposed block could also support a commercial building.



Possible initial phase redevelopment

Additional Growth

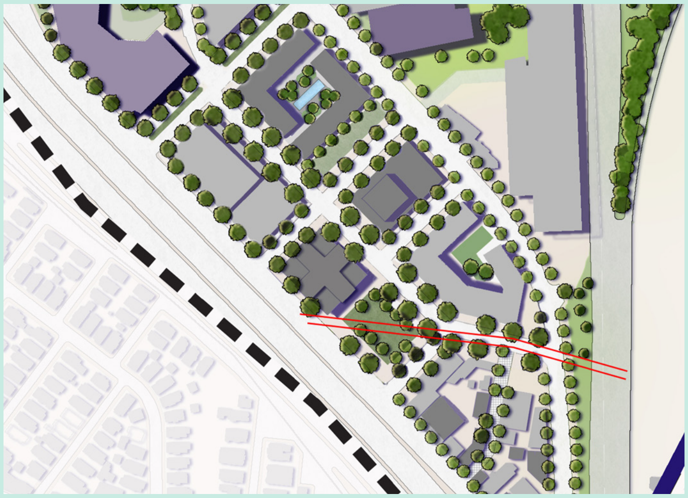
While the existing Home Depot remains in operation, a new Home Depot store can be built on the parking lot along Mystic Avenue. A 2-story store could be a podium base of a block building type with showrooms on the second floor and the Garden Center located on the roof. The structural grid of the podium could easily be aligned with commercial building footprints on the upper floors above the store and an underground parking garage could serve all the uses.



Speculative commercial development added

Full Build-Out

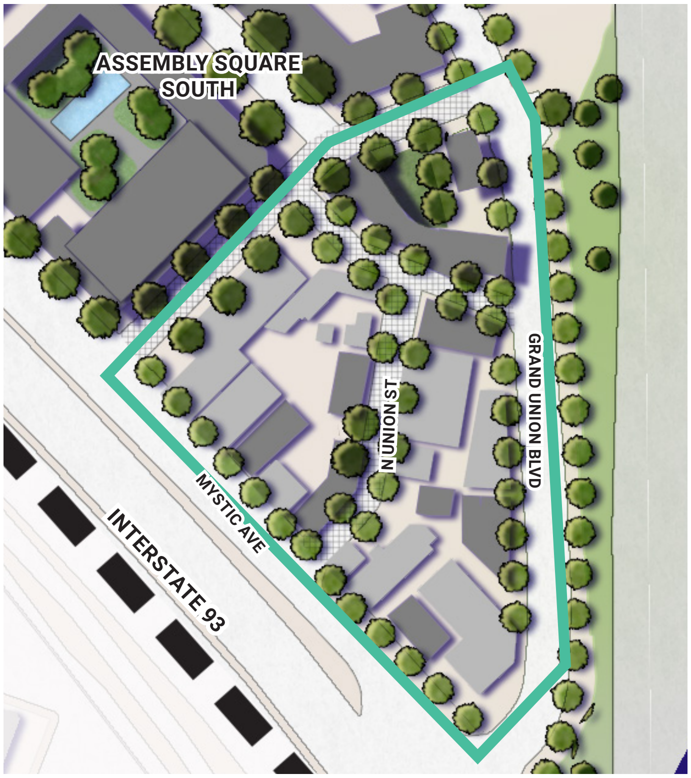
With the new Home Depot store operational, the original store site could now be redeveloped as a combination of new residential and commercial buildings. The market hall building and civic space that had been contemplated in the charrette plan can be located along Mystic Avenue to allow the easement to cross an open green. The remaining portion of the underground infrastructure could dictate the location of a new street so the pipe will remain easily accessible.



Potential full build-out of Assembly South

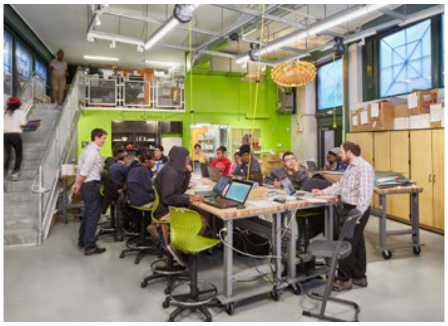
ASSEMBLY POINT MICRO-DISTRICT

Throughout the public process, participants expressed a desire for the human-scale design and finer-grained development represented by the Assembly Point micro-district area. Assembly Point has a more distinctive street and block network. Its existing streets, small parcels, and multiple property owners give it a character all its own. The existing buildings have smaller footprints and are mostly occupied by artisans and smaller businesses. This area is ideal for a vibrant micro-district supporting a diverse range of uses, such as arts and crafts, maker space, local restaurants, and residential use.



Illustrative plan showing a possible vision for a new micro-district

Small museums



Maker space

PAPER SOURCE

Arts and crafts

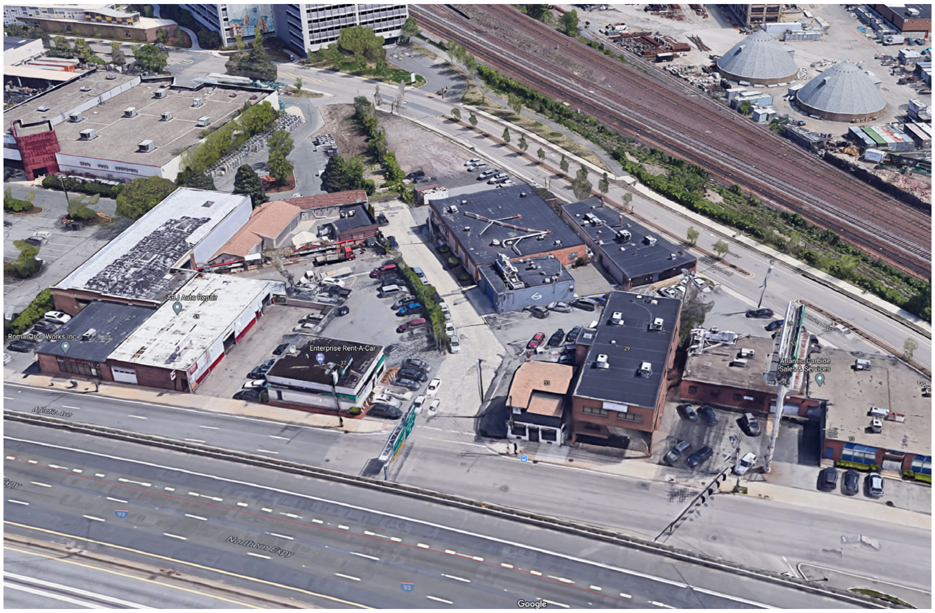
Local restaurants

Boutique hotel

Art installation

Assembly Point Design

The design for the Assembly Point micro-district celebrates the small-business character of the area. North Union Street would be maintained and extended as the main street. Street width would vary to create pockets of civic space along the way, culminating at a public plaza. The street's winding path would create a sense of mystery and discovery. Strategic infill development could line the main street with building facades and activity. The Assembly Point area of the future would offer residents and visitors a unique experience.


ABJ Auto Repair
Enterprise Rent-A-Car
Mystic Ave
Northern Expy
Google

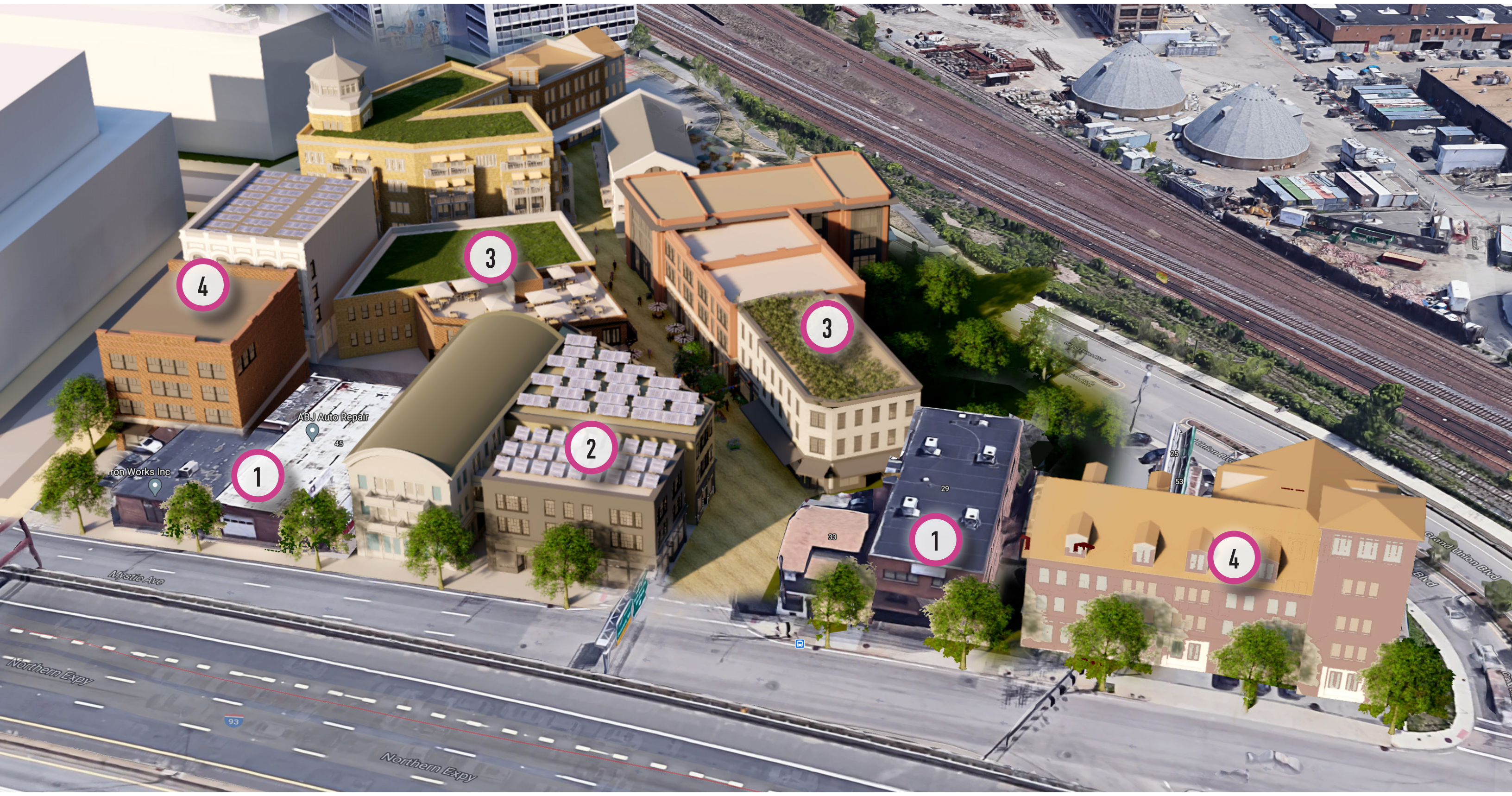
Existing conditions

① Some existing buildings could remain

② Solar panels on new development

③ Green roofs on new development

④ Strategic infill development


4
3
3
2
1
1
4
ABJ Auto Repair
ron Works Inc
Mystic Ave
Northern Expy
Northern Expy

ASSEMBLY POINT

As with Assembly South, new information about the area called Assembly Point has come to light since the public charrette and the publishing of the draft document. The economic market changed to make financial lending more difficult, and several property owners have given significant thought to the development of their properties. In some cases, this has manifested in permit applications for building projects, and in others there have been discussions about merging lots. As with any real estate proposition, the situation will keep evolving.

Critical Elements

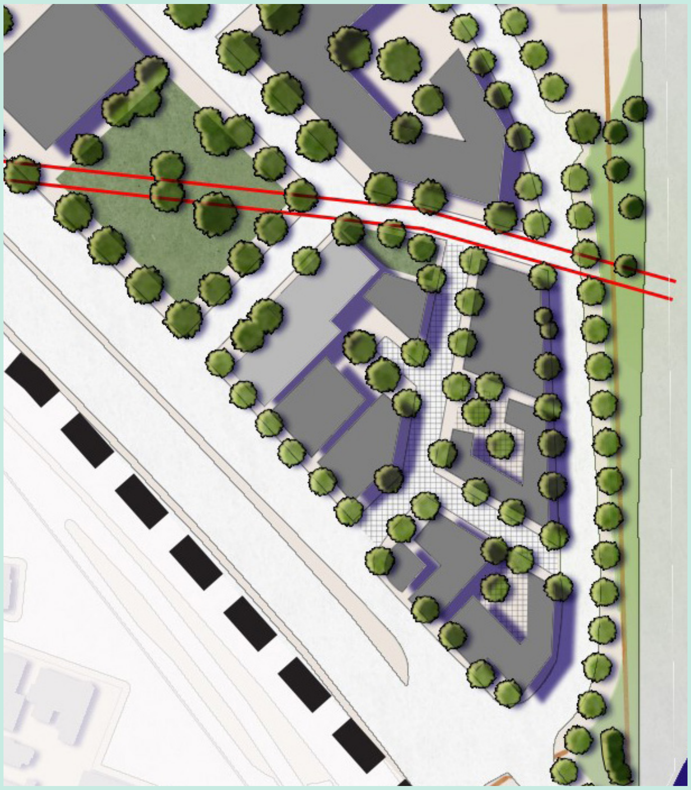
Ultimately, regardless of the size of the buildings, the design intent for the micro-district can be achieved through careful ground floor design and small business support. The factors that are critical to the success of the micro-district were established during the charrette process and form the critical elements of urban design:

North Union Street’s yellow brick paving should be maintained and expanded as a pedestrian-friendly main street for the district varying in width to create pockets of civic space.

Civic spaces should be flexible and multifunctional to support various activities and could integrate work from local artists to reflect the site’s industrial heritage.

Buildings would line the street and civic spaces with a diverse range of uses- such as arts and crafts, maker space, and local restaurants – in human-scale design and finer-grained development.

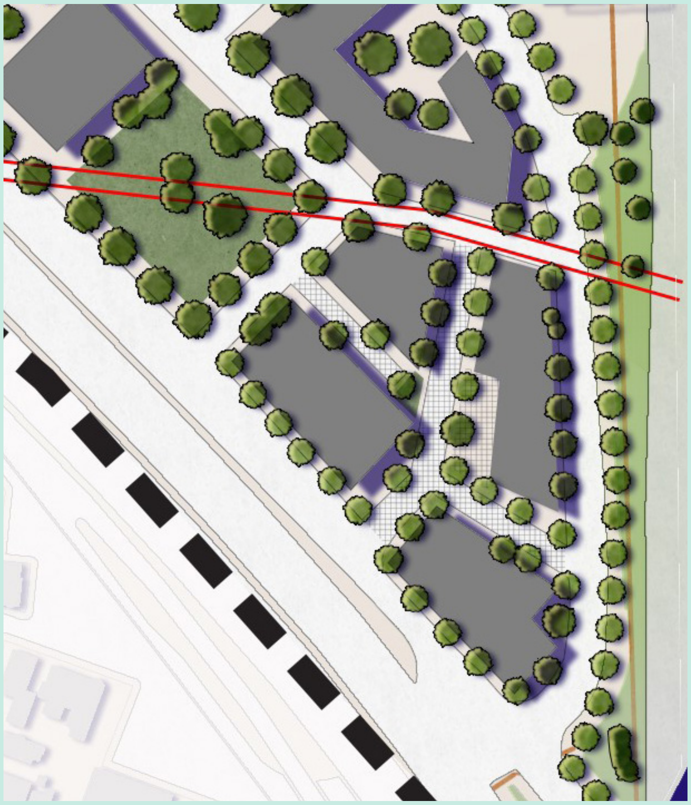
The sketches shown here, along with the original draft plan, demonstrate that there is a myriad of ways this area could develop while adhering to the principles identified above.



Small footprints on individual parcels.

One Possible Scenario

The first sketch clarifies the location of the existing properties lines and parcel ownership but is similar in design intent to the original draft plan. This version shows some existing businesses remaining and development on individual parcels with small civic spaces or shared yards spread throughout the district. The multiple property owners would need to cooperate to achieve the shared vision and would likely require heavy design scrutiny for consistency in the public realm. Given the small parcel sizes, the proportion of these buildings should be considered so the massing would not be taller than six (6) stories.



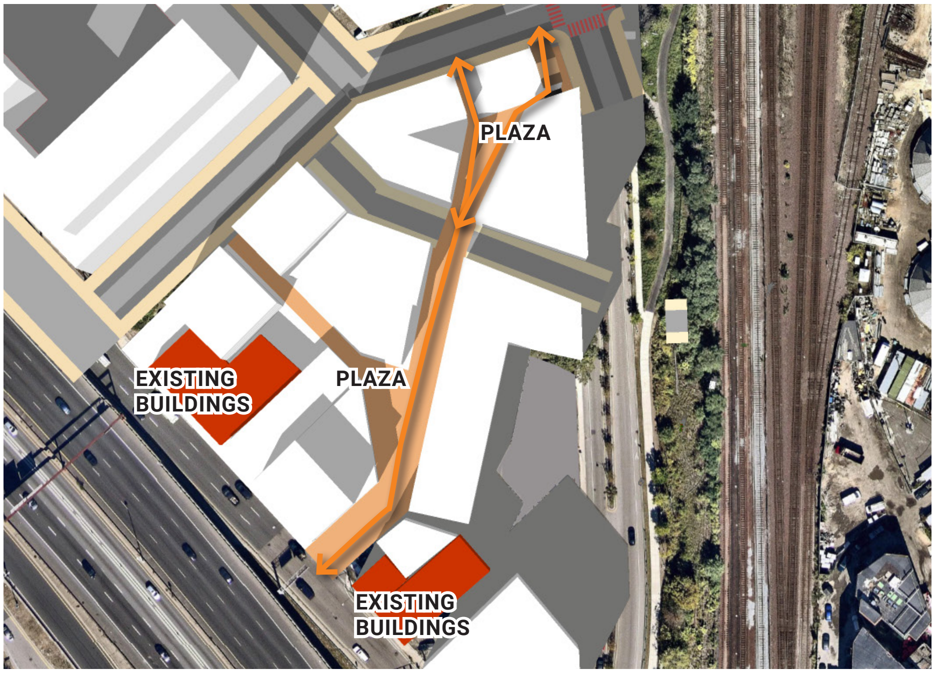
Large footprints on consolidated parcels.

Another Potential Scheme

The second sketch shows the possibility of lot consolidation to allow for the development of large floorplate buildings. This version also assumes that the existing businesses in the area are accommodated within new multi-story construction, rather than maintaining the one-story buildings. To accomplish this, a developer would need control over the specific parcels to be combined. In a bolder approach, a master developer could acquire all parcels, and this method would ensure that the community's goals are met as a detailed master plan.

Civic Space In Assembly Point

Civic space would be an essential component of the Assembly Point micro-district. Buildings would line civic spaces consisting of a shared street and two plazas. The character of these spaces could integrate work from local artists and reflect the site's industrial heritage. These spaces should be flexible and multifunctional to support various daily and seasonal uses, such as special events, food trucks, outdoor dining, and market displays.



Civic space diagram

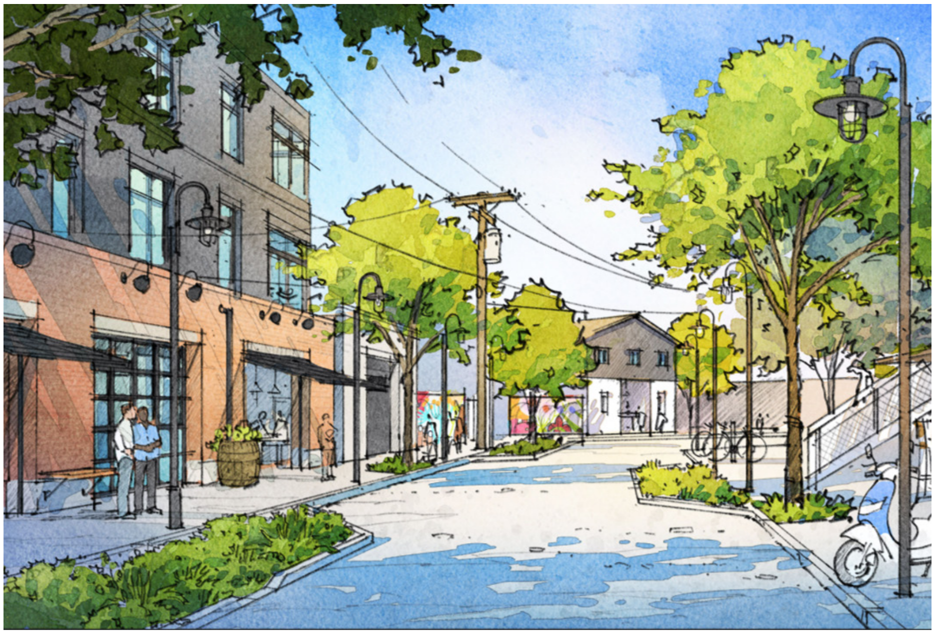
A possible civic space design for Assembly Point

Assembly Point Streetscapes

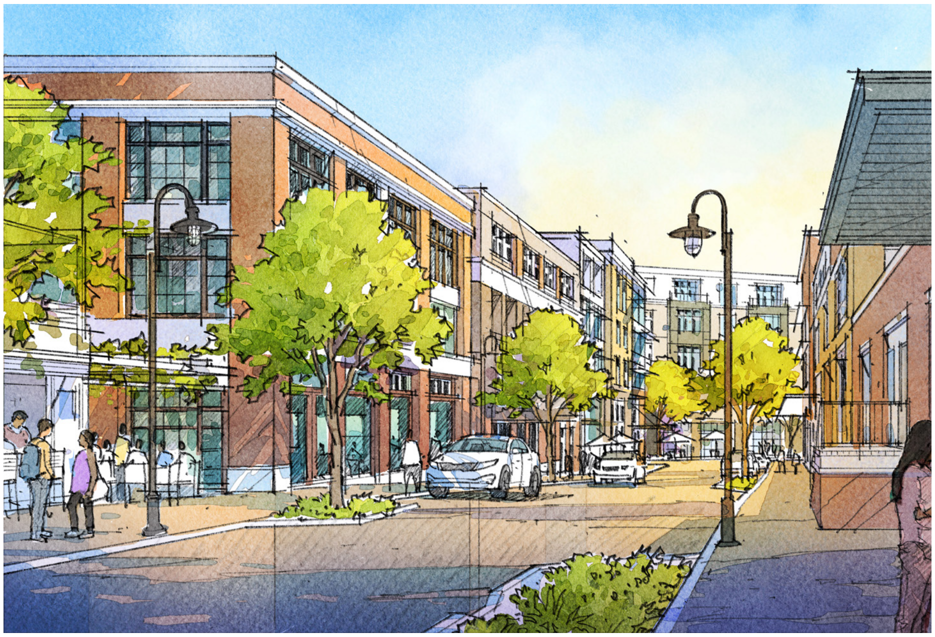
Currently, a portion of North Union Street is paved with yellow brick, and its fine texture creates a sense of human scale. New street paving should take a cue from this material and develop it into a consistent style and character throughout the area. North Union Street could be a pedestrian-friendly main street for the district, with lighting and plantings that create a comfortable and safe streetscape.

Outdoor furnishings could be selected to fit the character of the adjacent properties. The rendering looking south at existing buildings shows features in tune with small businesses such as studios and workshops for artists and artisans. The rendering looking north has a more formal streetscape design to match the architectural style of new development.

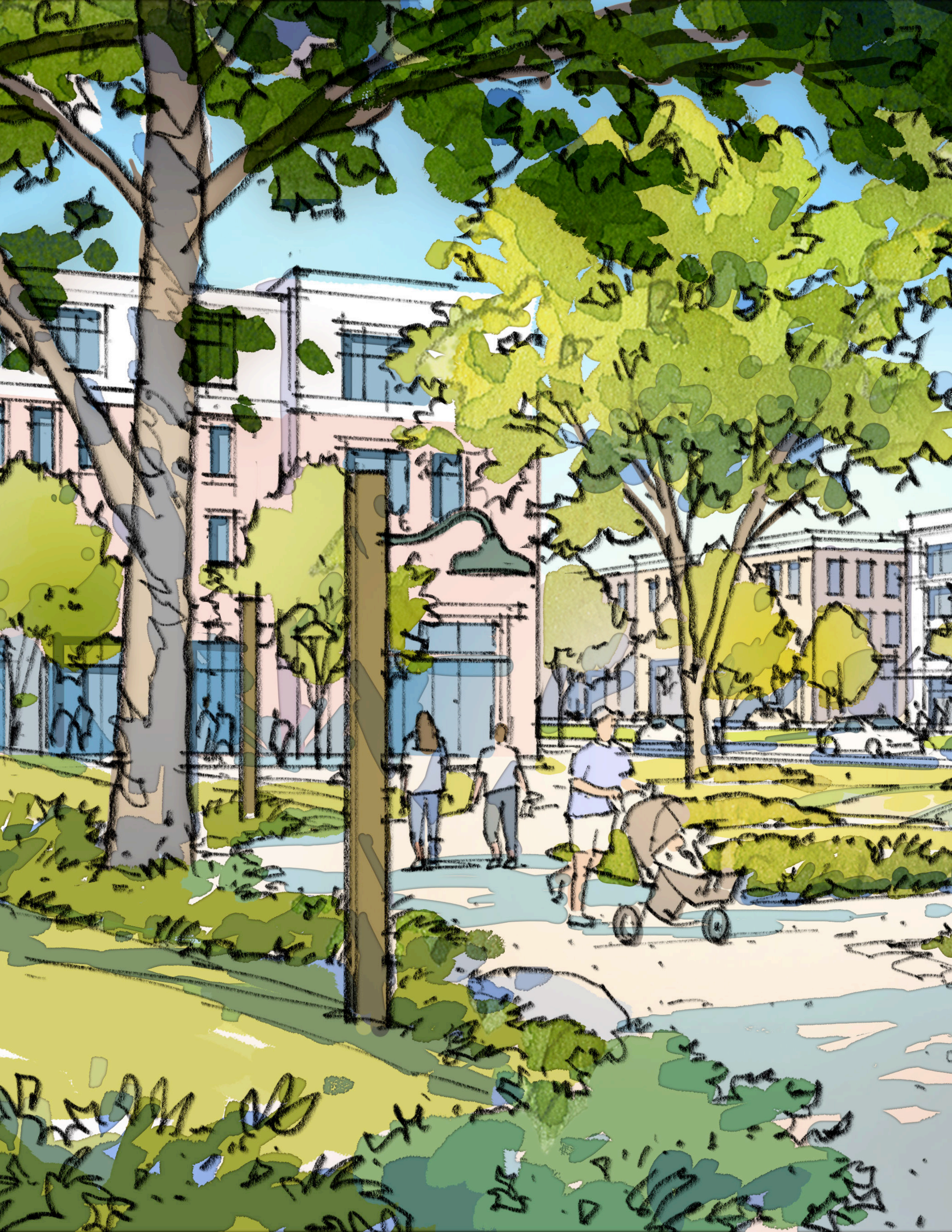
The North Union Street right-of-way should have varying widths, widening in some locations to become plazas or other types of civic space and allowing room for outdoor dining and events.



A possible streetscape design for Assembly Point, looking south



A possible streetscape design for Assembly Point, looking north



5. Mobility

This chapter outlines the mobility recommendations for Assembly Square. The following analysis shows how Assembly Square can further develop walkable, transit-served streets within the neighborhood while also helping to reconnect it with surrounding neighborhoods.

INITIAL MOBILITY FINDINGS

OUTREACH PROCESS

As discussed in our Public Process chapter, the design team conducted virtual outreach and met with residents, developers, stakeholders, and staff regarding the existing mobility challenges. These meetings included conversations with property owners and prospective businesses about their vision for mobility and how to best meet the needs of the local community. Participants discussed daily commuting, economic and commercial activities, deliveries, special events and more. The team also hosted open studio hours where community members could view the planning and development work being produced in real time and provide feedback based on their experiences and expectations.

WHAT WE FOUND:

- Wide roads, heavy traffic and long crossing distances make the neighborhood less inviting for walking or biking.
- Large-footprint highway infrastructure and elevational differences make it a challenge to connect with adjacent neighborhoods.

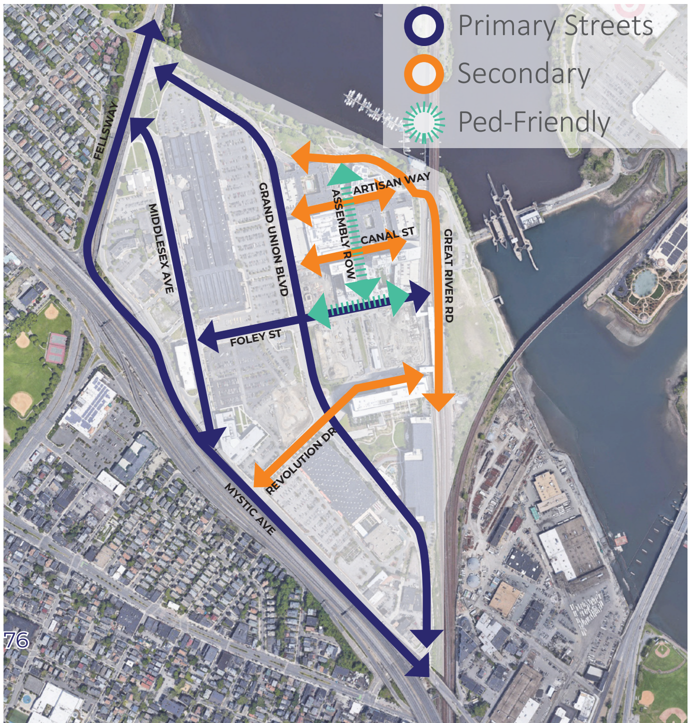
STAKEHOLDER INPUT

The collected feedback indicated there is major vehicle congestion each day in and around Assembly Square. The community identified the Fellsway as being particularly problematic during the morning and evening peak times. This heavy traffic makes travel to the site difficult, especially for residents coming from the greater Somerville area. The issue is compounded by a general lack of connection to Somerville for transit, biking and walking that leaves residents less likely to travel to Assembly Square with any frequency. Once visitors are at the site, pedestrian travel is seen as difficult and unsafe because of the wide roadways and high-speed vehicle traffic. Residents and stakeholders hope for better access and more pedestrian and bicycle facilities that improve safety when traveling to and within Assembly Square.

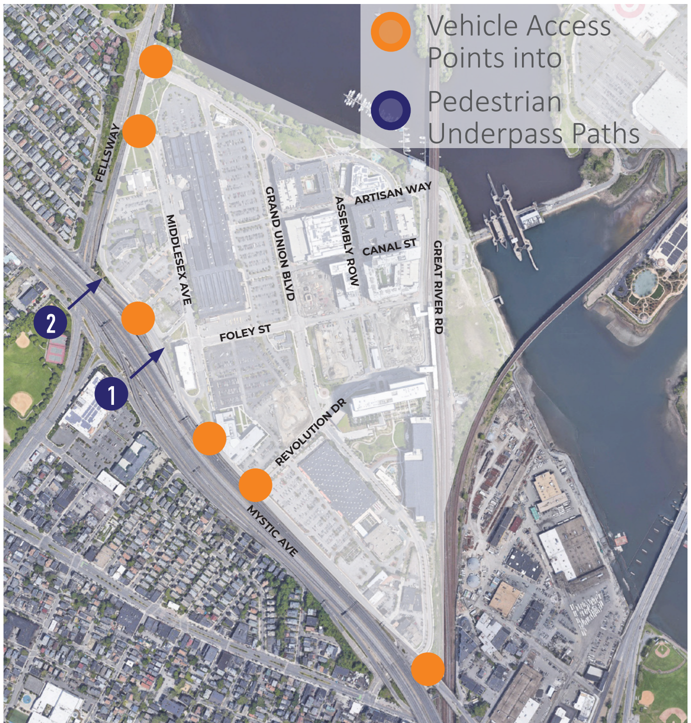
WHAT WE HEARD:

- “Lack of connectivity from the greater Somerville area.”
- “Crossings into Assembly Square are unsafe and unreachable.”
- “There are issues with speeding on Great River Road and Grand Union Boulevard and major vehicle congestion around the site’s perimeter.”

Street hierarchy diagram


Primary Streets
Secondary
Ped-Friendly
FELLSWAY
MIDDLESEX AVE
GRAND UNION BLVD
ASSEMBLY ROW
ARTISAN WAY
CANAL ST
GREAT RIVER RD
FOLEY ST
REVOLUTION DR
MYSTIC AVE

Access points diagram


Vehicle Access Points into
Pedestrian Underpass Paths
FELLSWAY
MIDDLESEX AVE
GRAND UNION BLVD
ASSEMBLY ROW
ARTISAN WAY
CANAL ST
GREAT RIVER RD
FOLEY ST
REVOLUTION DR
MYSTIC AVE
1
2

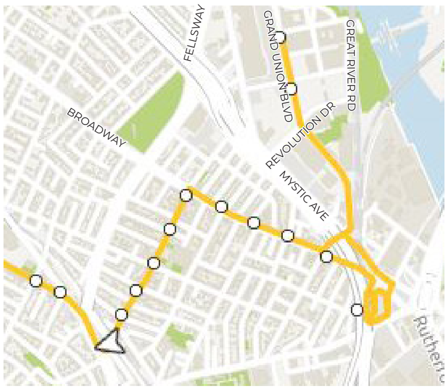
TRANSIT NETWORK

MBTA bus route 90 is the only bus route that directly serves the Assembly Square area. Bus route 90 runs between Davis Station and Assembly Square, traveling along Highland Avenue and through the East Somerville neighborhood. Three other bus routes (89, 101 and 95) pass through Somerville in the vicinity. Bus route 89 runs between Davis Station and Sullivan Square, traveling primarily along Broadway. Bus route 101 runs between Malden Center Station and Sullivan Square, passing through the City of Medford and along Broadway within Somerville. Bus route 95 runs between Arlington Center or West Medford, passing through the City of Medford and along Mystic Avenue (Route 38) through Somerville. Bus route 95 is an underutilized service along Mystic Avenue that experiences traffic congestion delays. In the short term, there are plans for an inbound peak-hour bus lane on Mystic Avenue with a possible future expansion to a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) facility between Sullivan Square and Medford Square.

MICROMOBILITY

Bluebikes have two locations and Zipcar has a single location in Assembly Square. The first Bluebikes station is located at the Assembly Square MBTA Orange Line stop and has 14 docks. The second Bluebikes dock is located at the corner of Grand Union Boulevard and Foley Street. However, more are planned with new development along

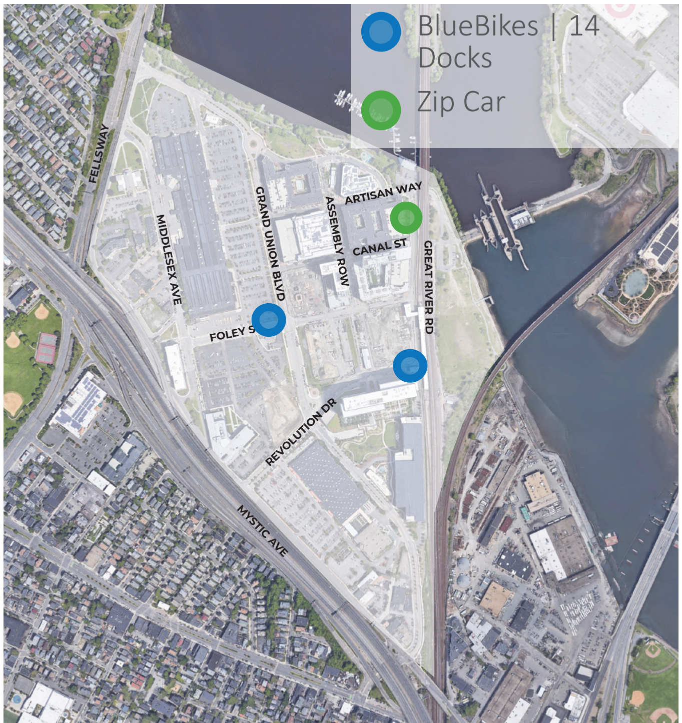
MBTA Route 90 Bus to Davis Square


FELLSWAY
GRAND UNION BLVD
GREAT RIVER RD
BROADWAY
REVOLUTION DR
MYSTIC AVE

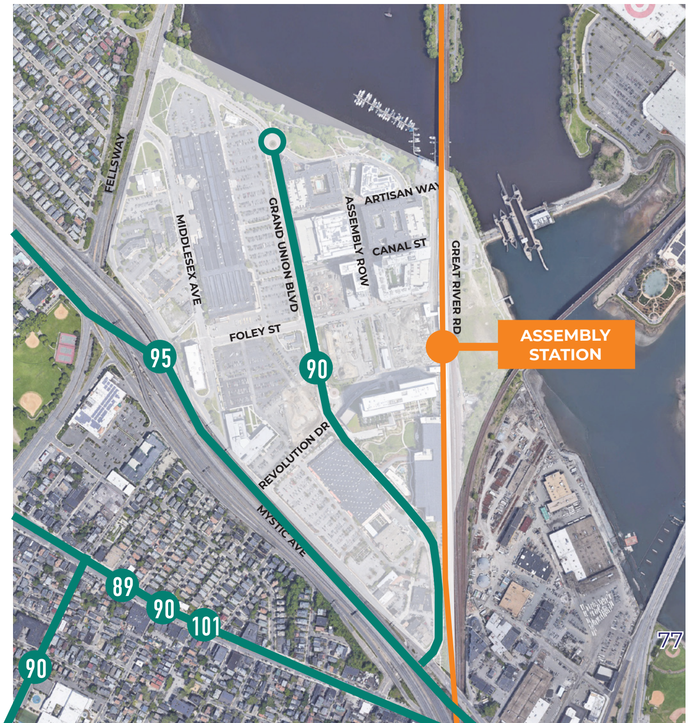
Existing MBTA Route 90

MBTA Orange Line

Micromobility


BlueBikes | 14 Docks
Zip Car
FELLSWAY
MIDDLESEX AVE
GRAND UNION BLVD
ASSEMBLY ROW
ARTISAN WAY
CANAL ST
GREAT RIVER RD
FOLEY ST
REVOLUTION DR
MYSTIC AVE

Existing transit network diagram


FELLSWAY
MIDDLESEX AVE
GRAND UNION BLVD
ASSEMBLY ROW
ARTISAN WAY
CANAL ST
GREAT RIVER RD
FOLEY ST
ASSEMBLY STATION
95
90
REVOLUTION DR
MYSTIC AVE
89
90
101
90

STREET NETWORK

The existing street network is characterized by large blocks to the west of Grand Union Boulevard and a network of small streets to the east. There are basic bike lanes on Grand Union Boulevard and other locations as seen below. One major theme of the analysis, and an observation frequently mentioned by the public, is that Assembly Square is cut off from surrounding neighborhoods due to I-93, Fellsway, and the Mystic River.

WHAT WE FOUND:

- There are 11 prominent loading areas throughout the neighborhood.
- Primary emergency access is on Fellsway.

VEHICLE ACCESS + LOADING

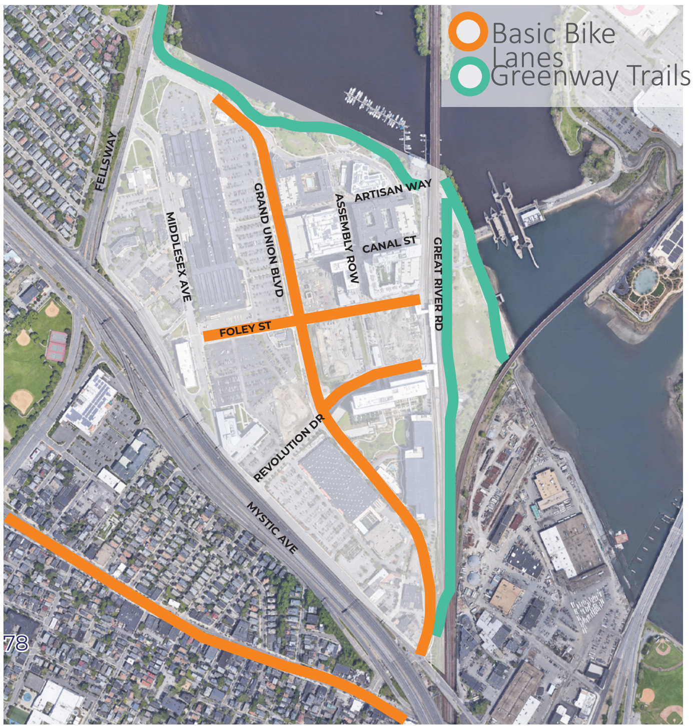
Primary vehicle access points are at the northern and southern entrances of Grand Union Boulevard. Other access points include Revolution Drive and the northern and southern entrances of Middlesex Avenue.

There are loading and service areas throughout Assembly Square. Within Assembly Row, loading areas are typically located on the first floor, internal to the buildings. Loading areas in Assembly Marketplace and on Middlesex Avenue are located at the rear of the buildings within the parking lot.

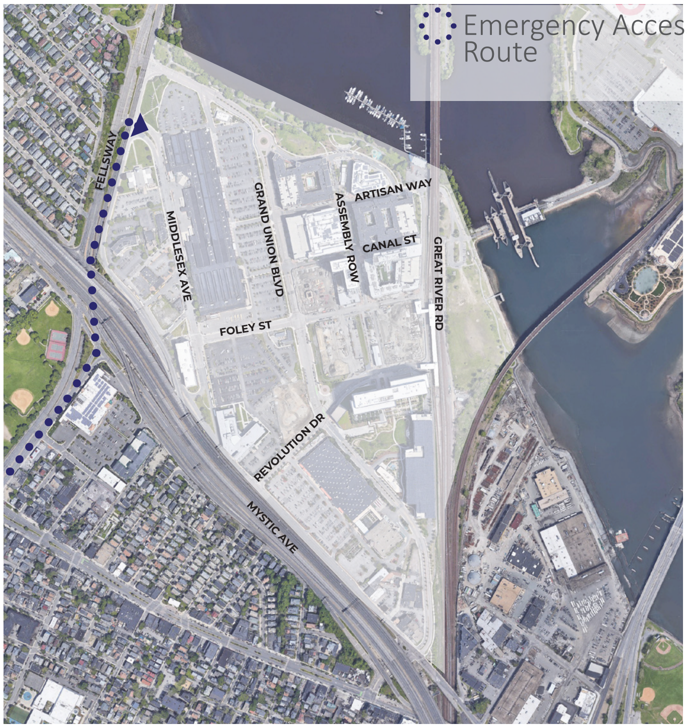
ACCESS + CONNECTIONS

As mentioned earlier, there is major vehicle congestion within and around Assembly Square. Traffic on Fellsway is particularly heavy during the morning and evening peak travel periods. And vehicles traveling at high speeds and on wide roadways make pedestrians feel unsafe. This creates a real challenge for those who would like to travel to the site. Residents are asking for better transit options for easier access to Assembly Square. They want more pedestrian and bicycle facilities that improve safety when traveling to and within Assembly Square.

Existing bicycle network diagram


Basic Bike Lanes
Greenway Trails
FELLSWAY
MIDDLESEX AVE
GRAND UNION BLVD
ASSEMBLY ROW
ARTISAN WAY
CANAL ST
GREAT RIVER RD
FOLEY ST
REVOLUTION DR
MYSTIC AVE

Emergency access


Emergency Access Route
FELLSWAY
MIDDLESEX AVE
GRAND UNION BLVD
ASSEMBLY ROW
ARTISAN WAY
CANAL ST
GREAT RIVER RD
FOLEY ST
REVOLUTION DR
MYSTIC AVE

PARKING

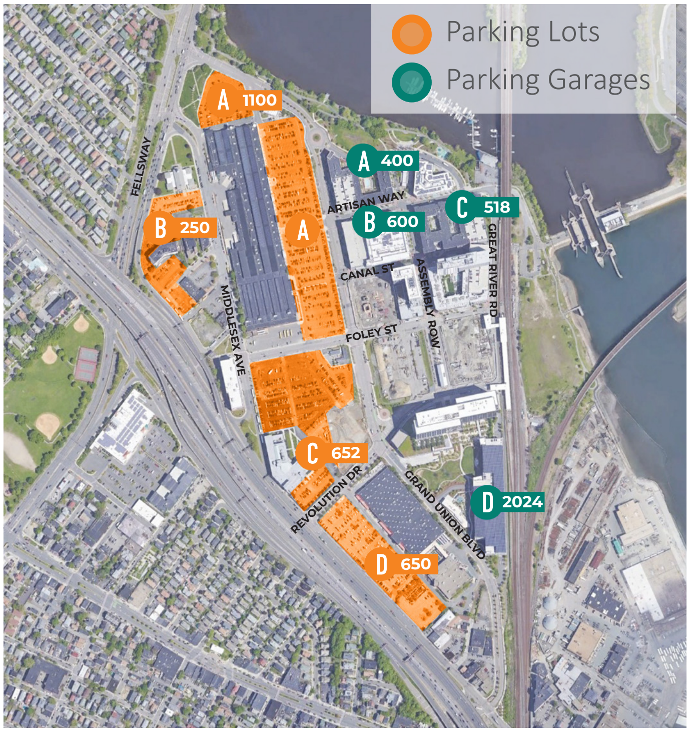
Parking garages are located on the eastern side of Assembly Square and are primarily used for retail and residential parking. An exception is the Mass General Brigham garage, which is used by the employees. All garages are pay-access parking spaces located on the western side Assembly Square. Parking is free in the lots adjacent to Assembly Marketplace (with a maximum of three hours). Not surprisingly, the free Assembly Marketplace lot typically has higher occupancy than other parking lots and garages.

In total, the Assembly Square development currently has about 7,000 parking spaces available at varying rates. With approximately 8,650,000 square feet of built development, the parking ratio is about 0.8 parking spaces per 1,000 square feet. One thousand eight hundred additional parking spaces are planned.

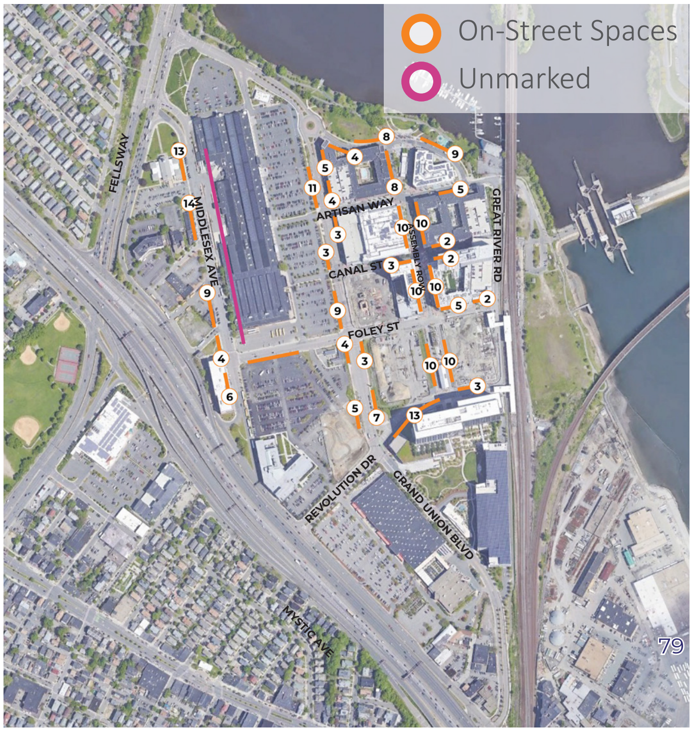
WHAT WE FOUND:

- Large city blocks and parking lots are oriented to suburban travel.
- There are few micromobility options in Assembly Square.

Surface parking and garage spaces


Parking Lots
Parking Garages
A 1100
A 400
ARTISAN WAY
C 518
B 600
B 250
A
CANAL ST
ASSEMBLY ROW
GREAT RIVER RD
FELLSWAY
MIDDLESEX AVE
FOLEY ST
C 652
REVOLUTION DR
GRAND UNION BLVD
D 2024
D 650

On-street parking


On-Street Spaces
Unmarked
FELLSWAY
13
14
MIDDLESEX AVE
9
4
6
8
4
9
5
11
4
8
5
ARTISAN WAY
3
3
10
10
2
2
3
CANAL ST
ASSEMBLY ROW
GREAT RIVER RD
10
10
5
2
9
FOLEY ST
4
3
10
10
3
5
7
13
REVOLUTION DR
GRAND UNION BLVD
MYSTIC AVE

PRIORITY AREAS

Nine priority areas within the Assembly Square neighborhood were chosen to demonstrate how changes in the right-of-way can help provide greater options for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders. These proposals have two main goals:

1. Ensure that current and future streets within Assembly Square have more space for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders, and;
2. Address the barriers to greater connectivity between Assembly Square and the surrounding neighborhoods.

GATEWAYS AND CORRIDORS

Priority areas are divided into two main categories: gateways and corridors. The proposed recommendations for the Assembly Square gateways detail how to improve connectivity to the neighborhood and create easier and safer ways for residents and visitors to reach their destinations. These changes might include tightening curb radii, right-sizing streets, and improving pedestrian visibility at crossings.

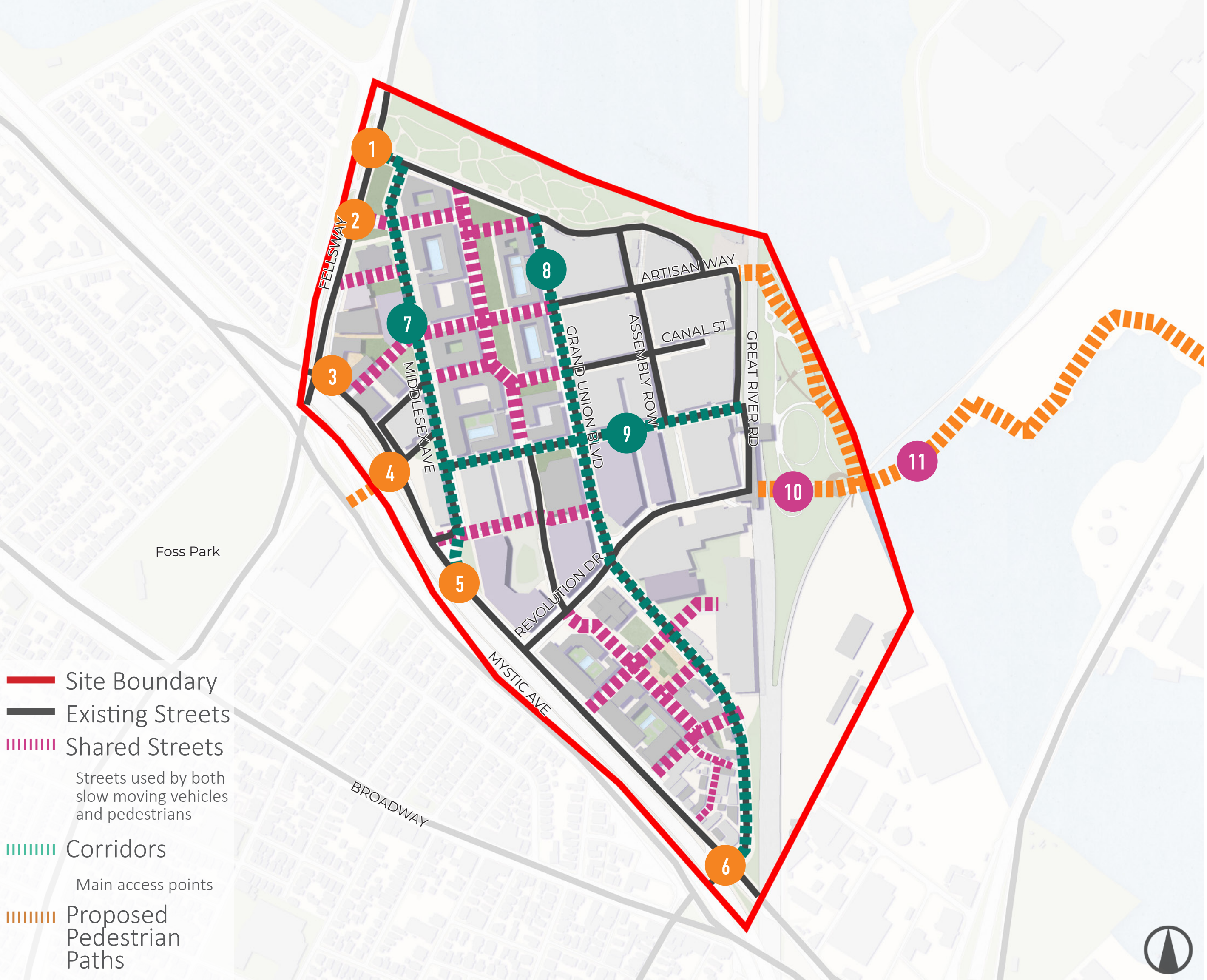
The gateways plan also imagines new designs for Assembly Square's perimeter roads along Fellsway and Mystic Avenue. While not all the streets included in these concepts are under city control, it is important to study the network wholistically and optimistically make recommendations for MassDOT implementation. The proposal envisions reducing the I-93 footprint by consolidating highway ramps and travel lanes as well as reconfiguring the structural columns, allowing for the area under the highway to be used as a public space and further improving travel into and out of Assembly Square. The plan also explores the removal of the Fellsway tunnel under I-93 footprint by clearing up the entrance and exit ramps.

The priority areas also include changes to the corridors. Long-term alterations to the street section will be studied. Instead of traditional auto-oriented design, the recommendations suggest that new roads be designed to generate walkable densities and land-use diversity along new corridors.

Grand Union Blvd

SOUTH SOUTH
28 93
Somerville
Boston
NORTH
93
28 NORTH
Malden
Mystic Ave

The above photos depict current gateway conditions at Grand Union Boulevard (top), Fellsway (middle), and Mystic Avenue (bottom). The proposed gateway designs address the barriers to greater connectivity between Assembly Square and the surrounding neighborhoods


FELLSWAY
ARTISAN WAY
CANAL ST
GRAND UNION BLVD
ASSEMBLY ROW
GREAT RIVER RD
MIDDLESEX AVE
REVOLUTION DR
MYSTIC AVE
BROADWAY
Foss Park
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
Site Boundary
Existing Streets
Shared Streets
Streets used by both slow moving vehicles and pedestrians
Corridors
Main access points
Proposed Pedestrian Paths

AREAS OF PRIORITY

Gateways

① Grand Union Boulevard (North) Gateway

② Middlesex Avenue (North) Gateway

③ Fellsway/Mystic Avenue Gateway

④ Kensington Connector Gateway

⑤ Middlesex Avenue (South) Gateway

⑥ Lombardi Street Gateway

Corridors

⑦ Middlesex Avenue Corridor Street Section

⑧ Grand Union Boulevard Corridor Street

⑨ Foley Street Corridor Street Section

Access

⑩ New access to Draw Seven Park from the MBTA station

⑪ Pedestrian bridge connection to Everett

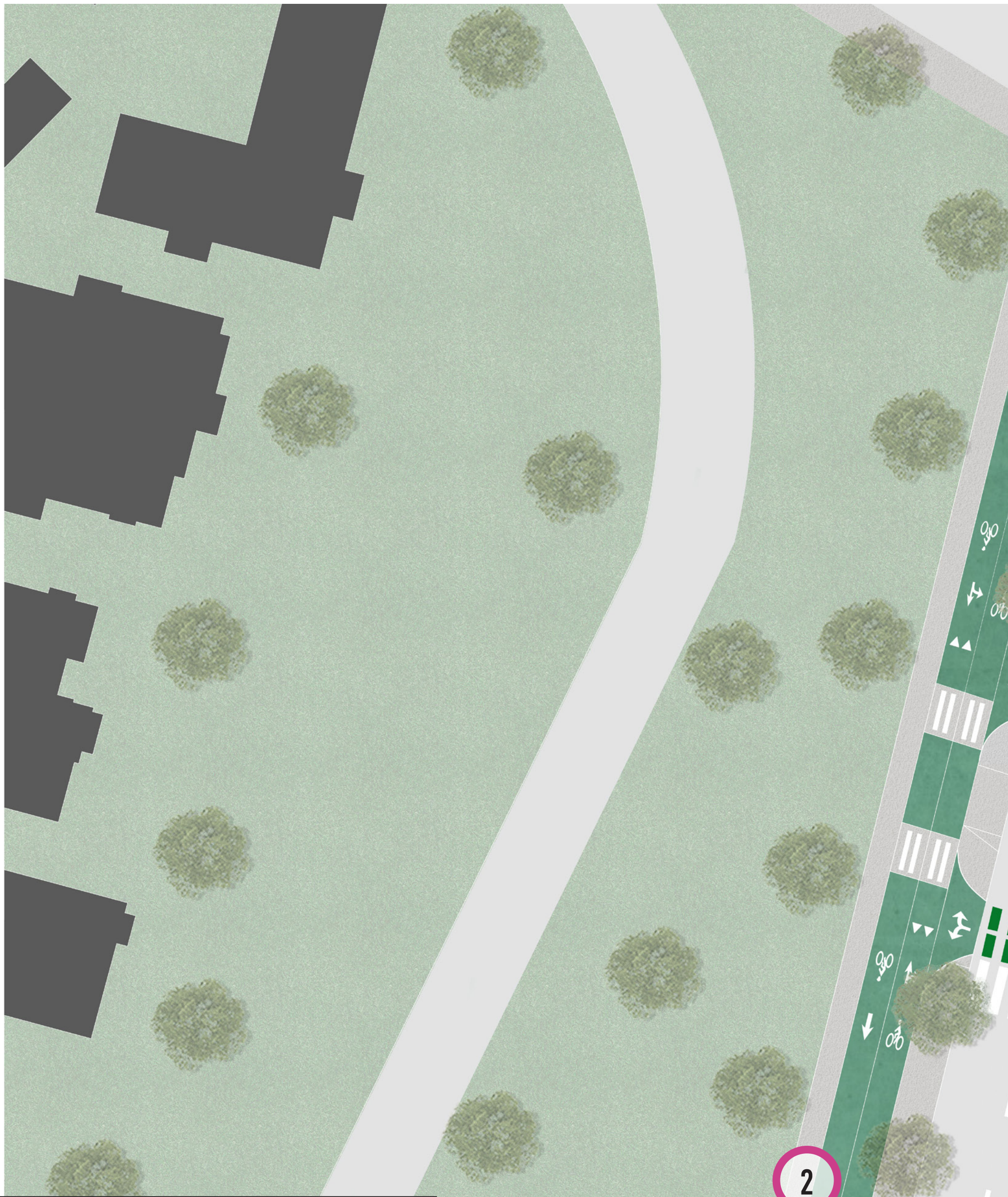
GATEWAYS

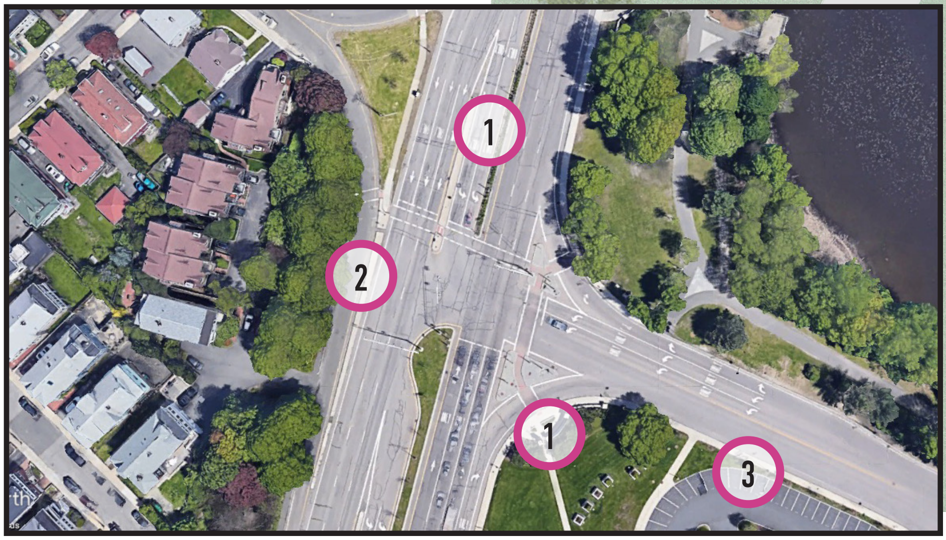
1. GRAND UNION BOULEVARD (NORTH) GATEWAY

① This plan imagines a reduction in the number of lanes on Fellsway and fewer accepting lanes on Grand Union Boulevard. It removes the right-turn pockets and reduces the curb radii to discourage high-speed turns.

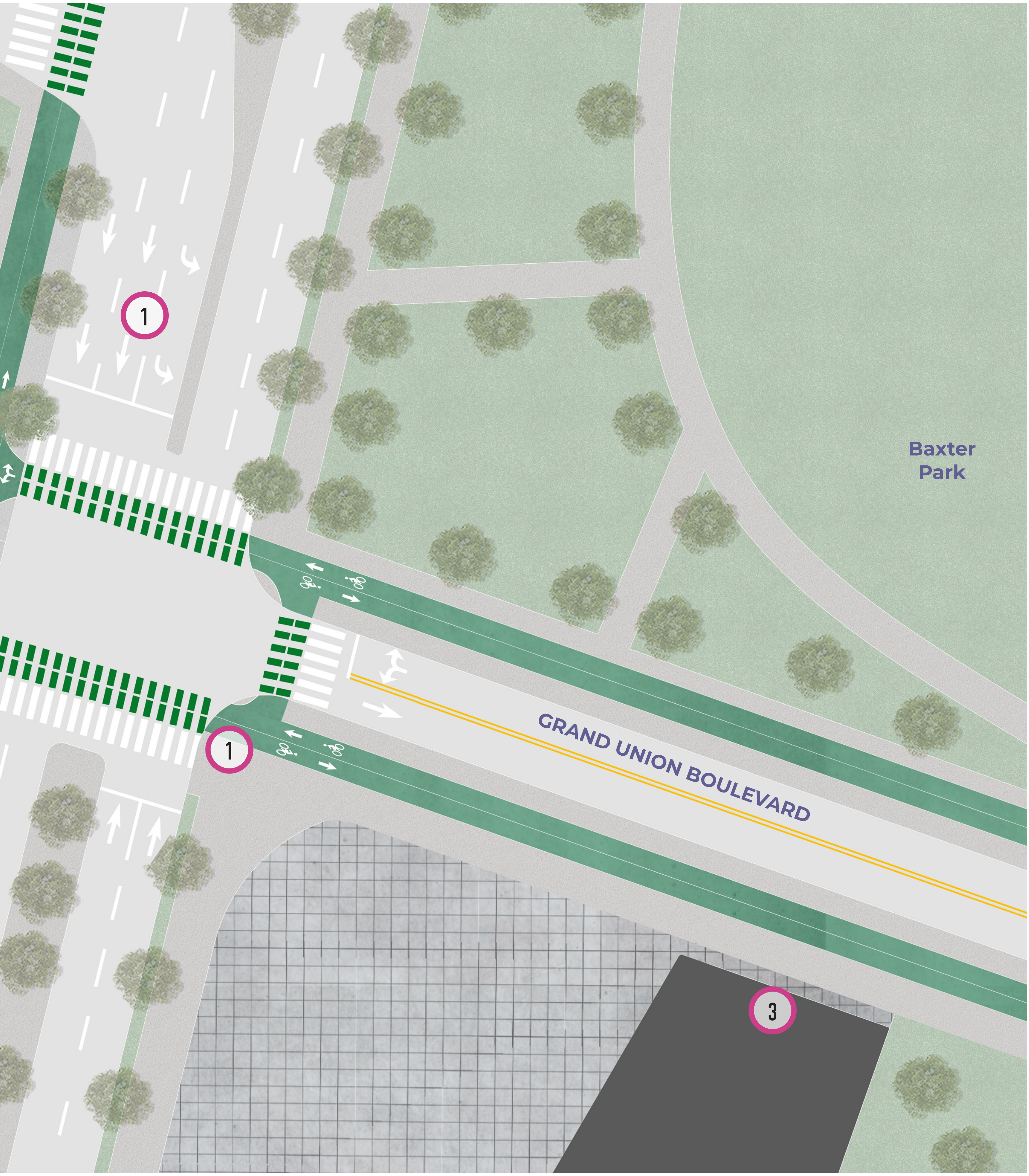
② The proposal envisions Fellsway with a sidewalk-level protected two-way bike lane, landscaped pedestrian crossing islands, a tree-lined boulevard, wide sidewalks, and shorter crossing distances.

③ The new design removes surface parking lots from the perimeter areas and encourages active urban edges. It envisions the transition from Baxter Park into a denser neighborhood to the south.





Existing intersection conditions


1
1
3
Baxter Park
GRAND UNION BOULEVARD

Proposed intersection design

2. MIDDLESEX AVENUE (NORTH) GATEWAY

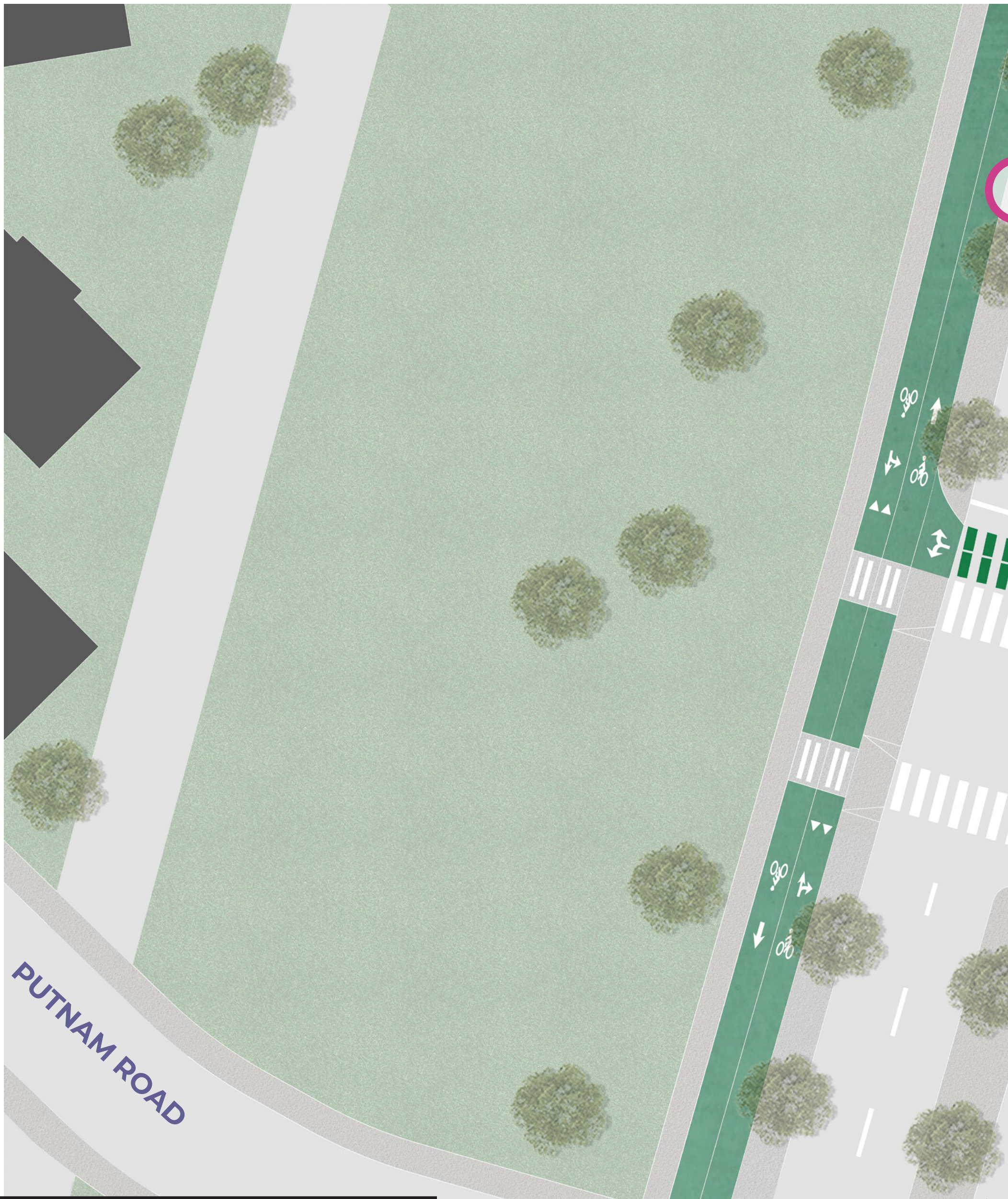
① The gateway at Middlesex Avenue is currently designed as a suburban mall entrance. This proposal would better define the edge of Fellsway as a grand boulevard by infilling the existing mall parking lot with buildings that face the

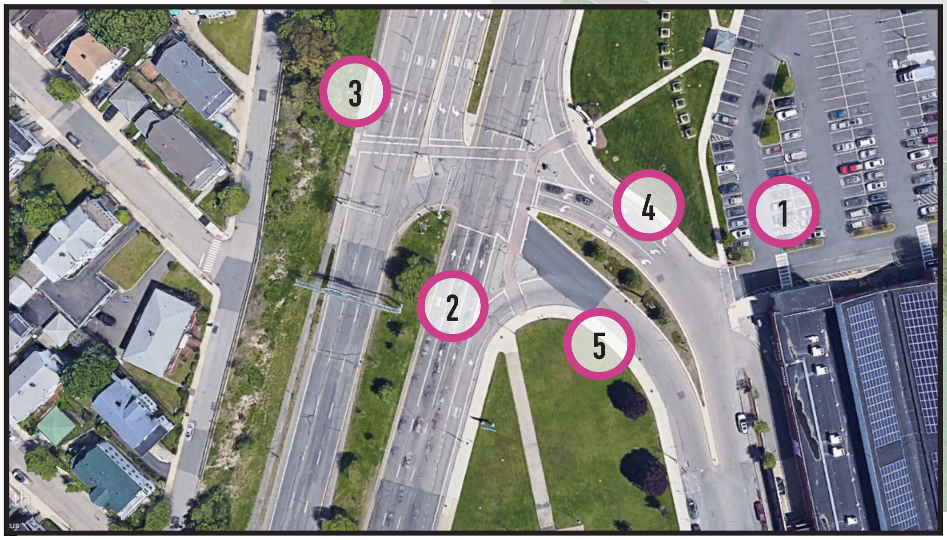
② Crossing distances and curb radii would be reduced.

③ The design consolidates surplus lanes on the Fellsway and reallocates that space as a two-way protected bike lane.

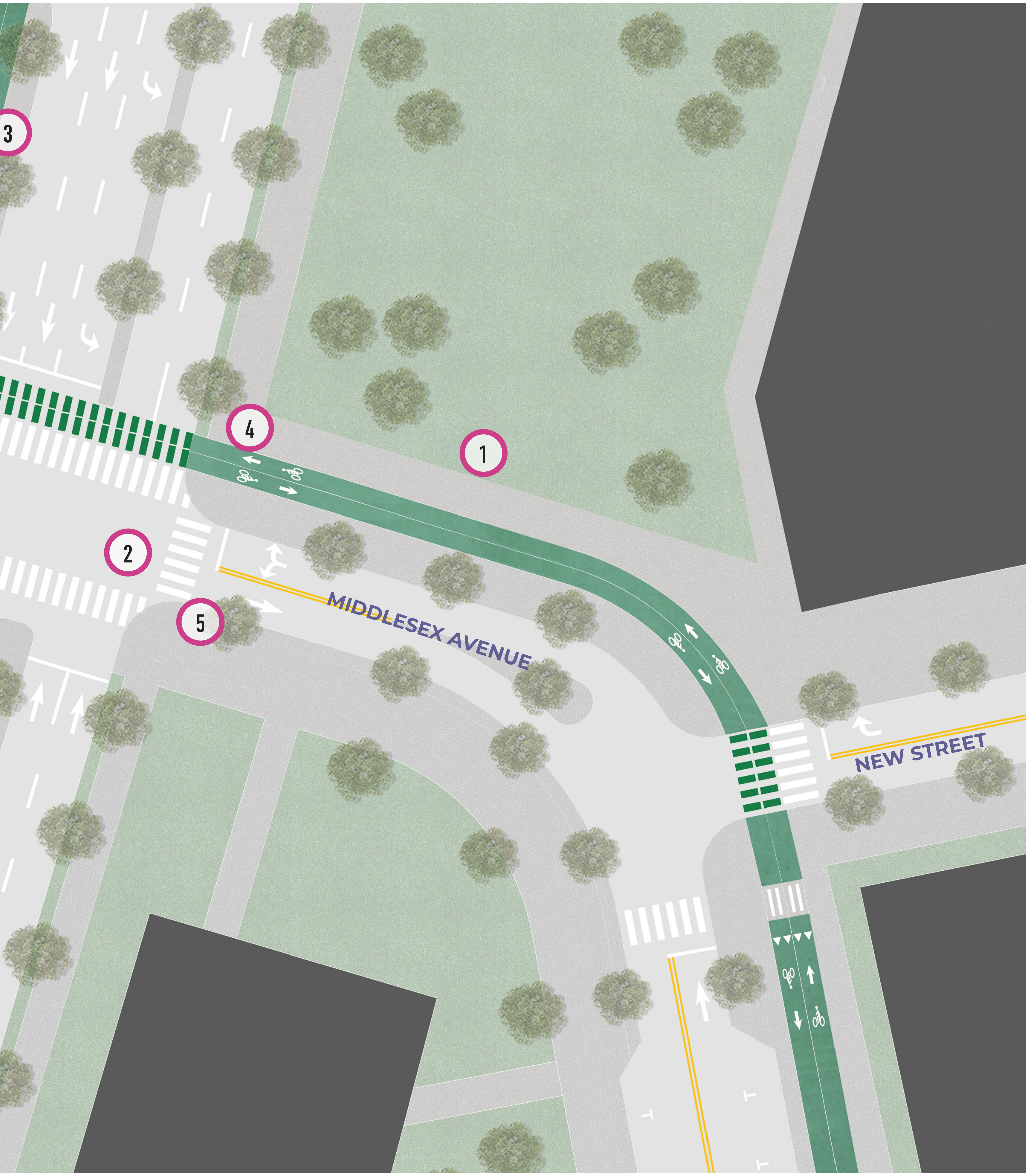
④ Sidewalk-level two-way bicycle infrastructure on Middlesex Avenue would connect to the Fellsway protected bike lane.

⑤ The scale of this intersection would be reduced by eliminating a right-turn pocket and median.





Existing intersection conditions


3
4
1
2
5
MIDDLESEX AVENUE
NEW STREET

Proposed intersection design

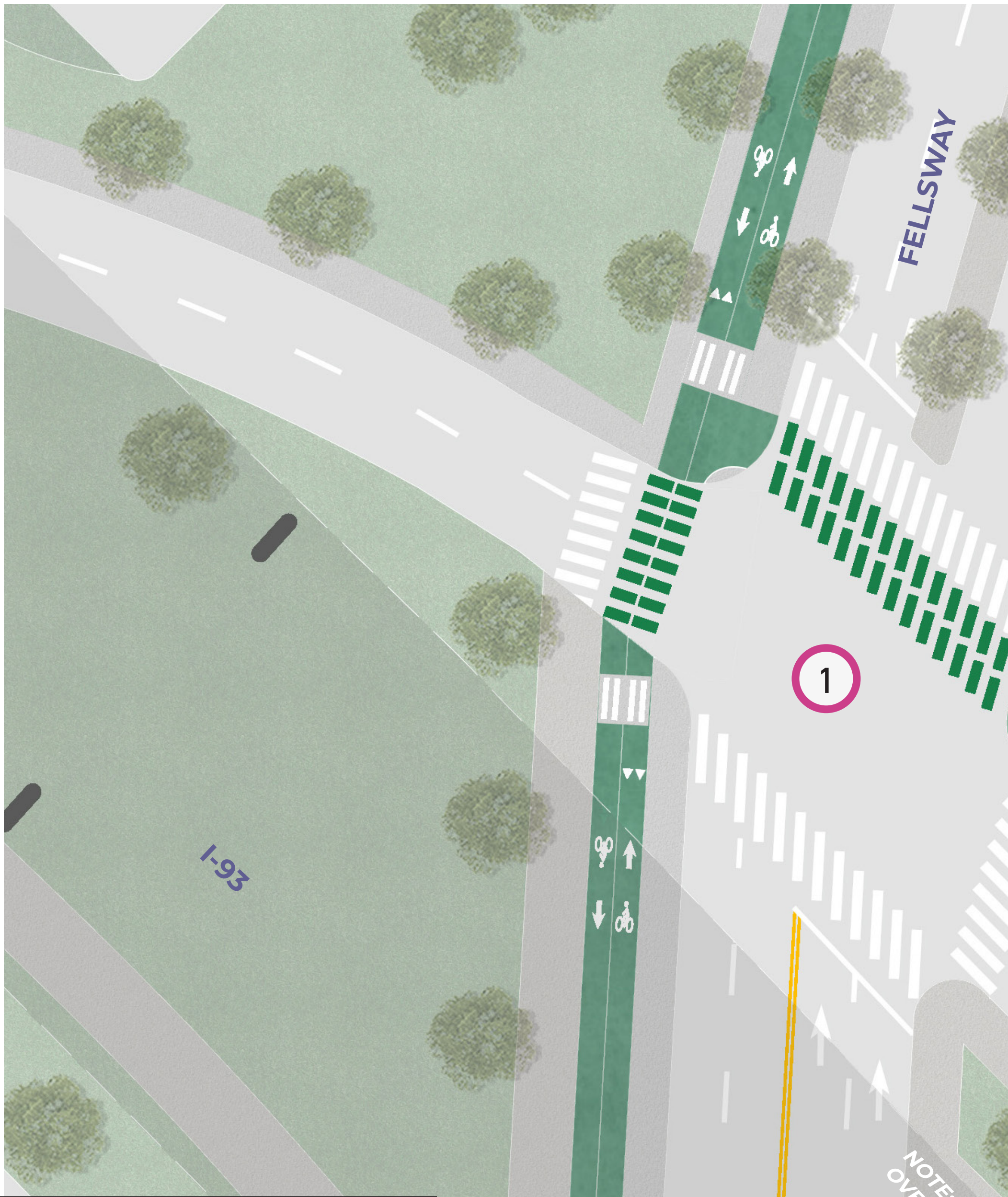
3. FELLSWAY/MYSTIC AVENUE GATEWAY

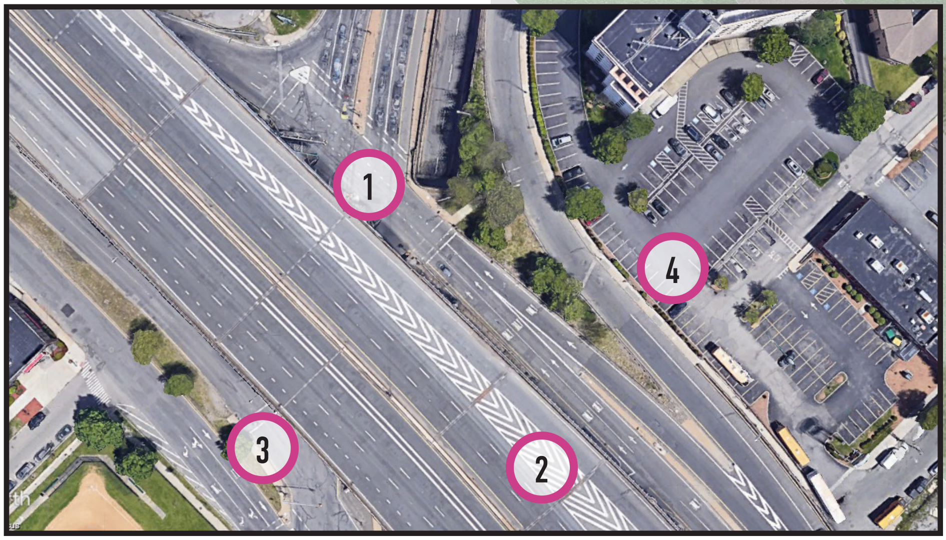
① This long-term design envisions the transformation of this busy highway interchange (with limited access to Assembly Square) into a safer and more inviting intersection with tighter curb radii, shorter crossing distances, and safer pedestrian access.

② The I-93 footprint would be reduced, creating a more humane urban edge for Assembly Square. Decreasing ramps and highway columns would allow the area under the highway to be used as public space.

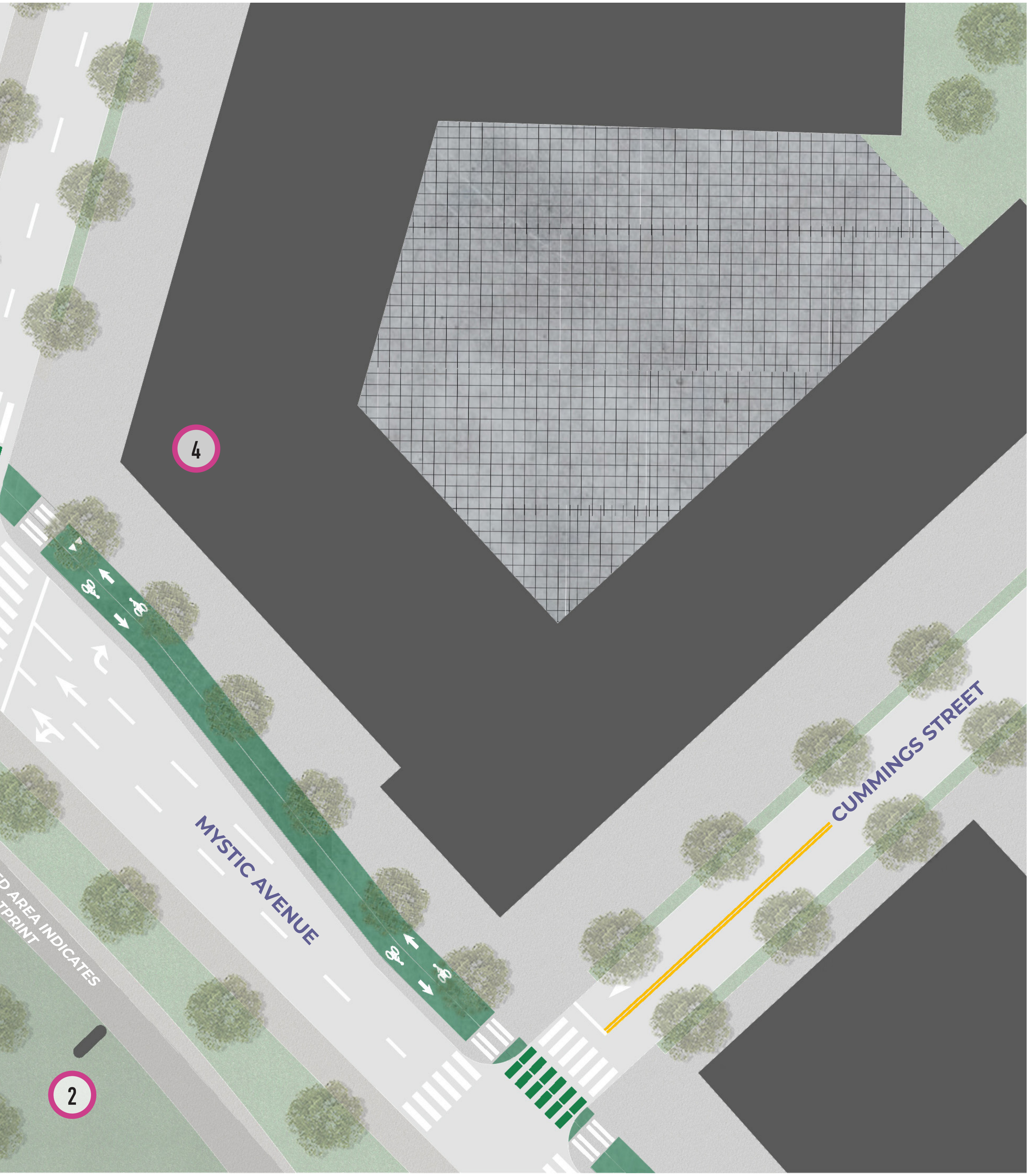
③ This proposal continues the elevated two-way bike facility south of Foss Park to connect to protected bike lanes along Broadway.

④ Large surface parking lots would be replaced with infill buildings that line the street and frame public space.





Existing intersection conditions


4
MYSTIC AVENUE
CUMMINGS STREET
D AREA INDICATES
TPRINT
2

Possible intersection design

4. KENSINGTON CONNECTOR GATEWAY

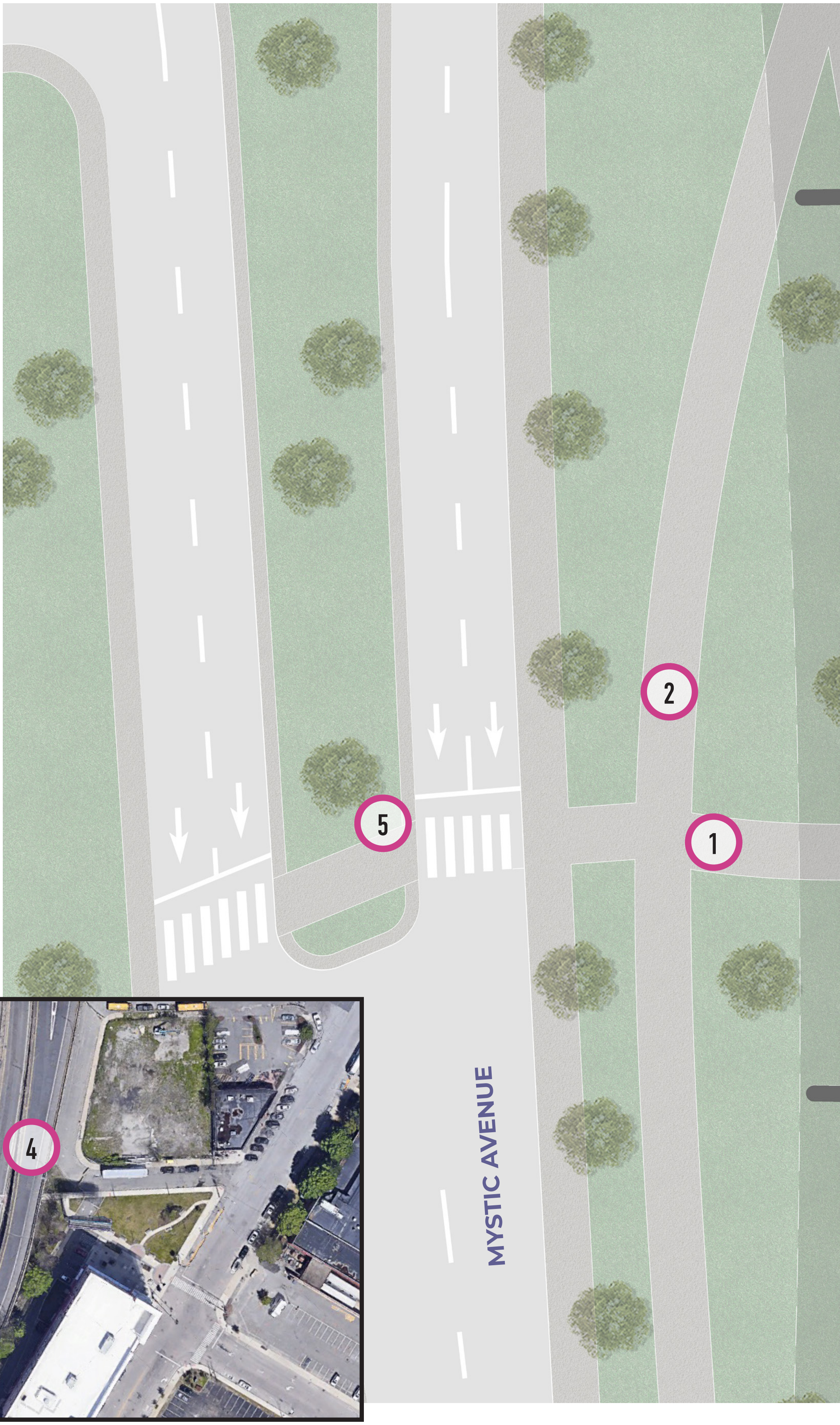
1. The proposed design for the Kensington Connector seeks a consolidation of ramps and an overall reduction in the I-93 footprint. The design also proposes adding public art and lighting.

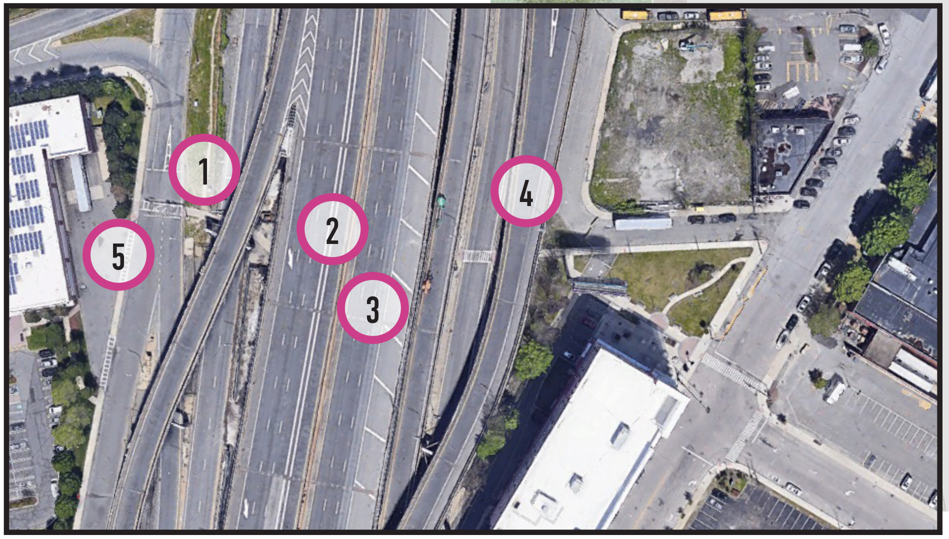
2. Cyclists and pedestrians would enjoy shared paths to explore the public art pieces and natural elements to be installed along the new underpass

3. A rotating public art program and would include opportunities for art on the underpass structure and around the pedestrian and bike path.

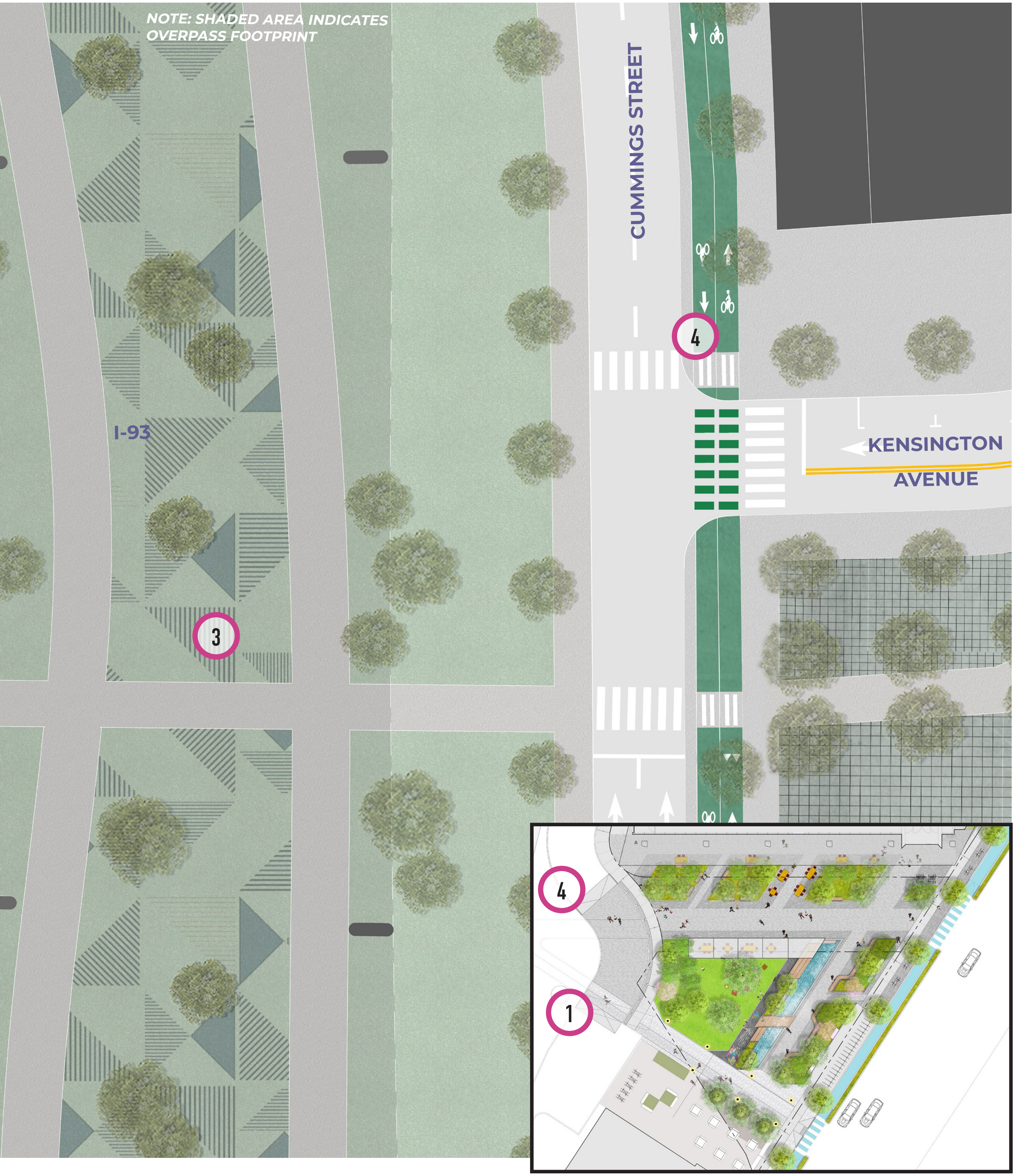
4. Similar to the Fellsway proposal, a redesigned Mystic Avenue would connect to the park at Kensington Avenue.

5. Pedestrian crossings should apply HAWK signal with full signalization.





Existing intersection conditions


NOTE: SHADED AREA INDICATES OVERPASS FOOTPRINT
CUMMINGS STREET
4
I-93
KENSINGTON AVENUE
3
4
1

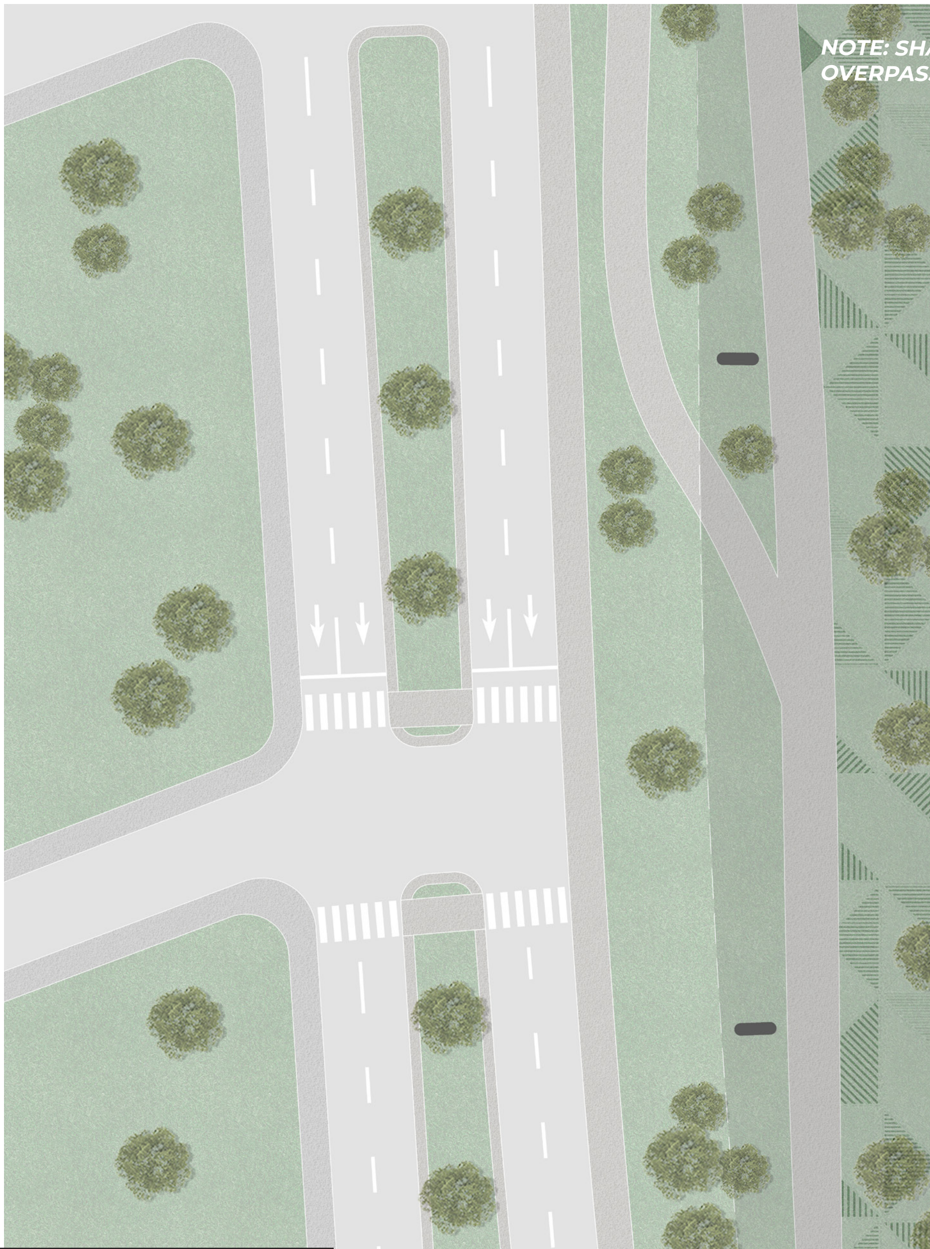
New park design

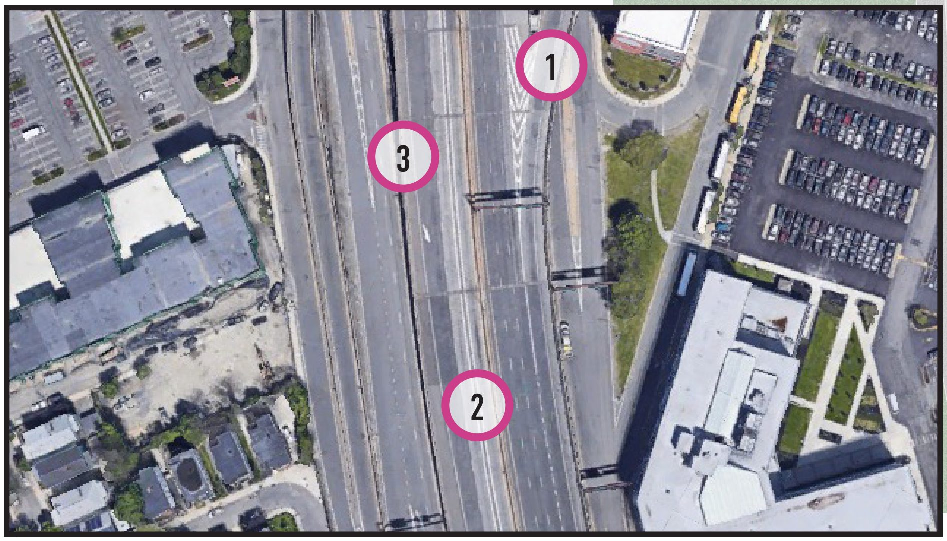
5. MIDDLESEX AVENUE (SOUTH) GATEWAY

① Redesigning the intersection of Middlesex Avenue and Mystic Avenue would eliminate the angled exit only and create a right in/right out entry into Assembly Square. A new street, a reconfigured neighborhood park, and a two-way protected bike lane on either side of Middlesex Avenue would be created.

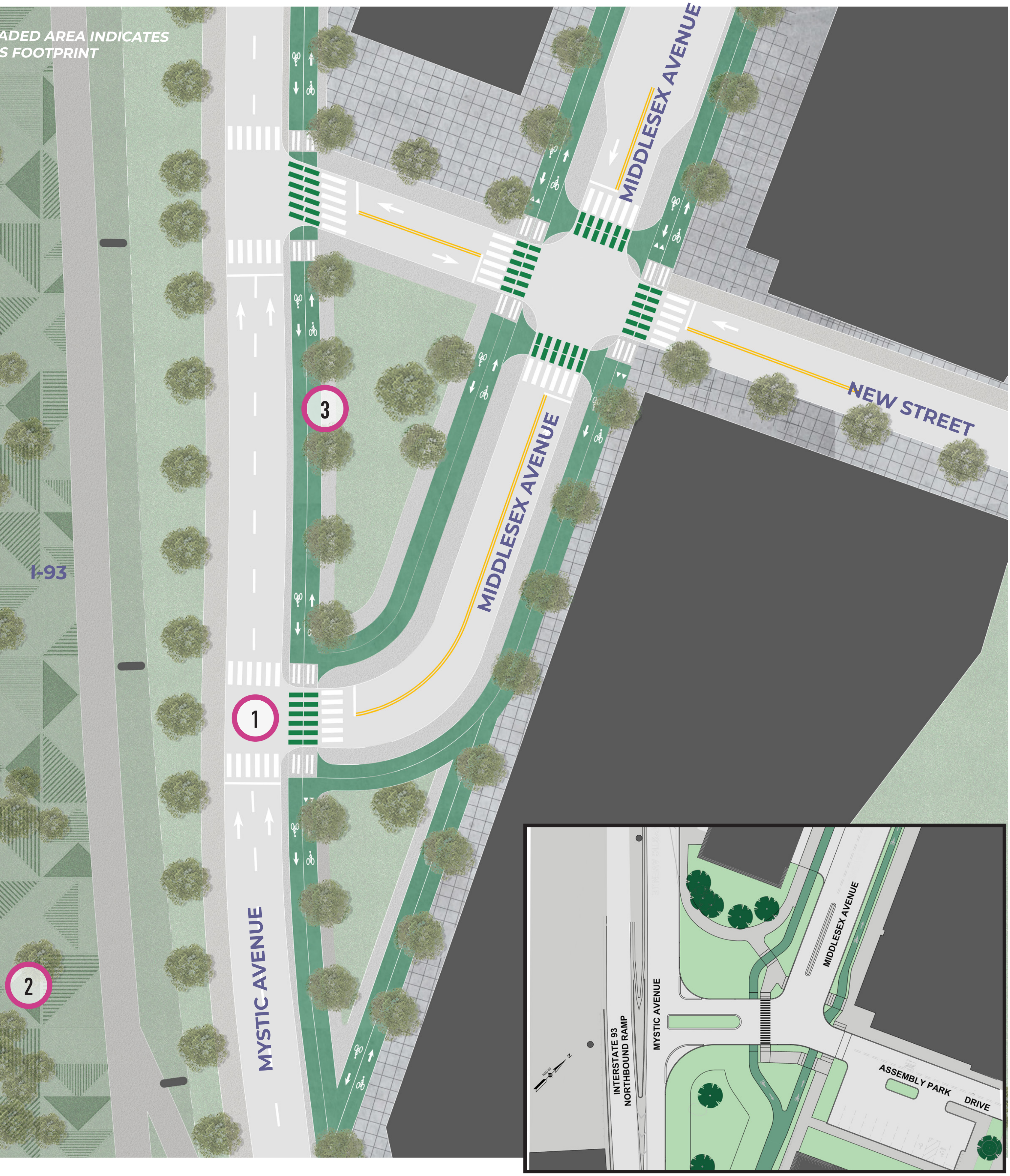
② Reducing the I-93 footprint accommodates a better pedestrian and bicycle amenity along the underpass, connecting the neighborhood from south to north, and allowing access to Assembly Square in a simpler, safer, more enjoyable way.

③ The Mystic Avenue corridor would incorporate a two-way protected bike lane to connect the proposed bicycle facilities on Middlesex Avenue and Grand Union Boulevard.





Existing intersection conditions


ADED AREA INDICATES
S FOOTPRINT
I-93
MYSTIC AVENUE
MIDDLESEX AVENUE
MIDDLESEX AVENUE
NEW STREET
1
2
3
INTERSTATE 93
NORTHBOUND RAMP
MYSTIC AVENUE
MIDDLESEX AVENUE
ASSEMBLY PARK
DRIVE
N
NAD 83

Revised intersection design

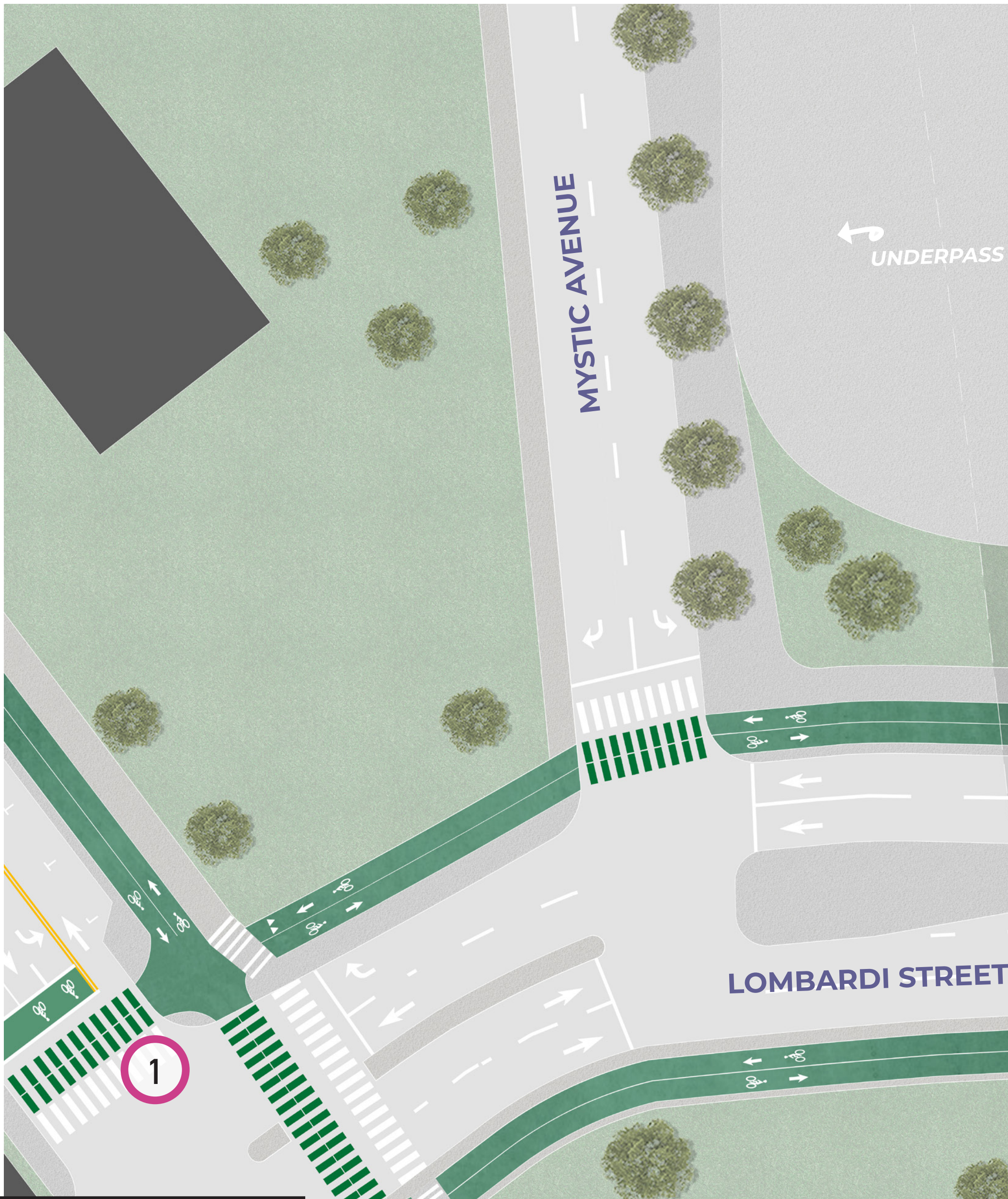
6. LOMBARDI STREET GATEWAY

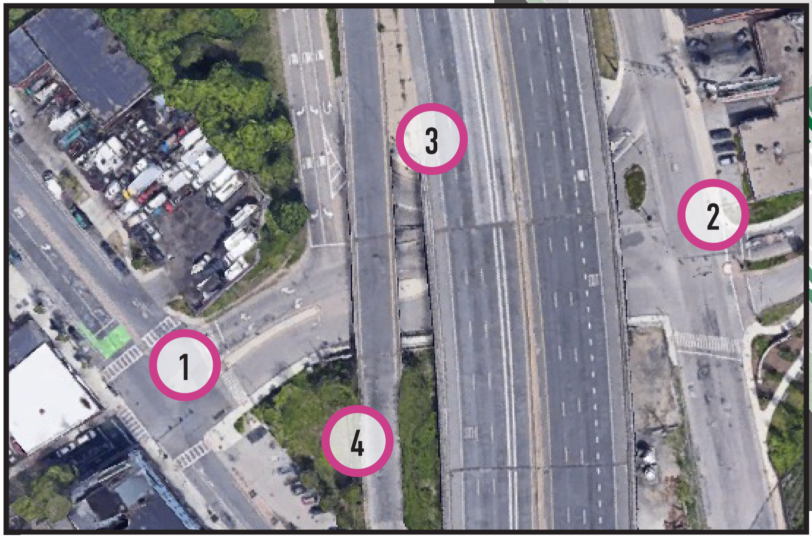
① The gateway design at Lombardi Street illustrates how the proposed bicycle facilities on Mystic Avenue and Grand Union Boulevard would connect to two-way protected bike lanes along Broadway.

② This plan envisions a northbound protected bike lane and fewer lanes on Mystic Avenue.

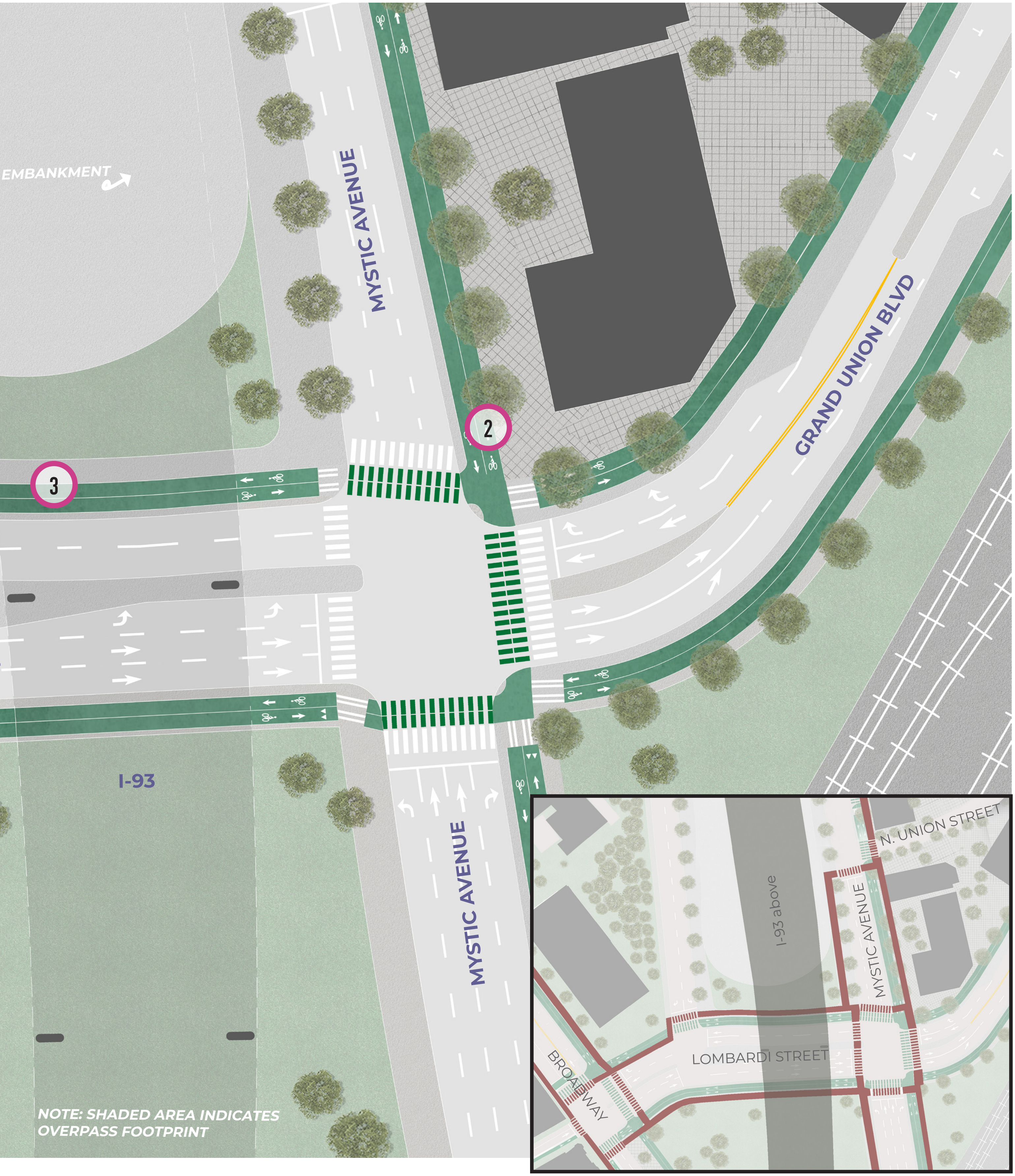
③ The design removes the turnaround from southbound Mystic Avenue to northbound Mystic Avenue and creates a safer crossing situation for pedestrians traveling along Lombardi Street.

④ Consolidating ramps and highway infrastructure also creates an opportunity for more expansive urban parks.





Existing intersection conditions


EMBANKMENT
MYSTIC AVENUE
2
3
GRAND UNION BLVD
I-93
MYSTIC AVENUE
N. UNION STREET
I-93 above
MYSTIC AVENUE
LOMBARDI STREET
BROADWAY

NOTE: SHADED AREA INDICATES OVERPASS FOOTPRINT

Improved pedestrian connections

STREET NETWORK

GENERAL APPROACH

Our guiding philosophy is that pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users are central to the design of the transportation network and will reduce the use of single-occupancy vehicles.

The design team established these mobility principles for future developments and changes to the right-of-way:

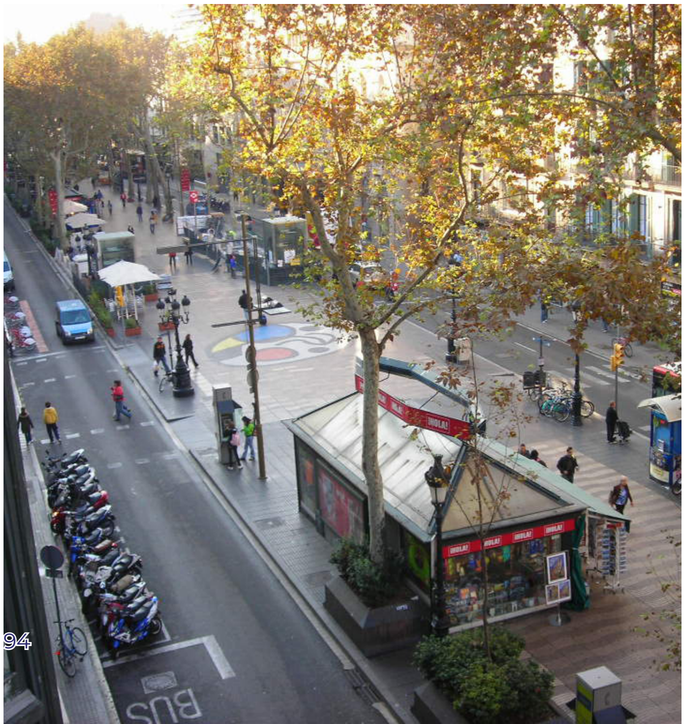
1. Create a compact and dense street network that connects with the existing streets within Assembly Square and with adjacent neighborhoods to the south and west.
2. Encourage the design of mixed-use streets that allows multimodal activity.
3. Everyone should have accessible safe places to walk, safe places to ride bikes, and safe places to drive.

The design team took inspiration from streets like Avenida Amsterdam in Mexico City and Las Ramblas in Barcelona. These streets were designed for a human-scale environment. Their popularity is undeniable and proves that more space for people means more participation in public life and a better quality of life. These examples influenced the recommendations in each priority area. Streets and street networks should be designed with the safety and accessibility of all travelers in mind.

Sidewalk conditions at Assembly Row

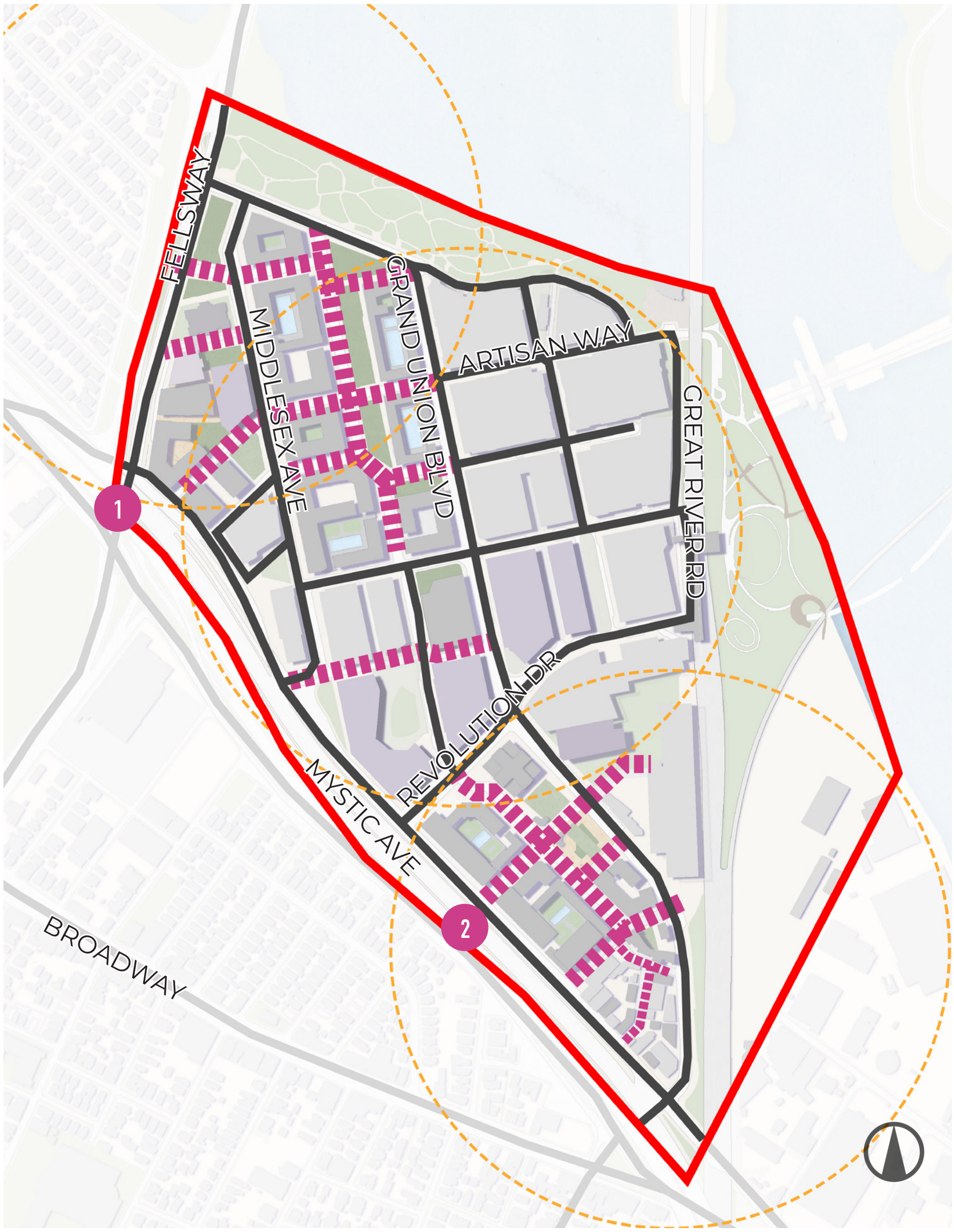
Current conditions at Grand Union Boulevard allows for room to accommodate wider sidewalks or protected bike lanes

Las Ramblas, Barcelona



Avenida Amsterdam, Mexico City

PROPOSED STREET GRID



🟥 Site Boundary

▬ Existing Street

◌ 1/4 mile radius Pedestrian Shed: area covered by a 5-minute walk from center to edge

▨ Streets created by the proposed grid

① The new grid will create new entry points into the neighborhood

② By creating smaller blocks, Assembly Square will be more compatible with its surrounding context

STREET GRID RECOMMENDATIONS

Walkable street networks are characterized by direct pedestrian paths of travel that provide the shortest distance to transit stops, a high density of intersections, and continuous sidewalks connected by well-designed crossings.

Shorter blocks contribute to great neighborhoods, reflect Somerville's heritage, and promote a safe, walkable environment. The goal of these recommendations is to make it easy for people to walk, bike, and take transit.

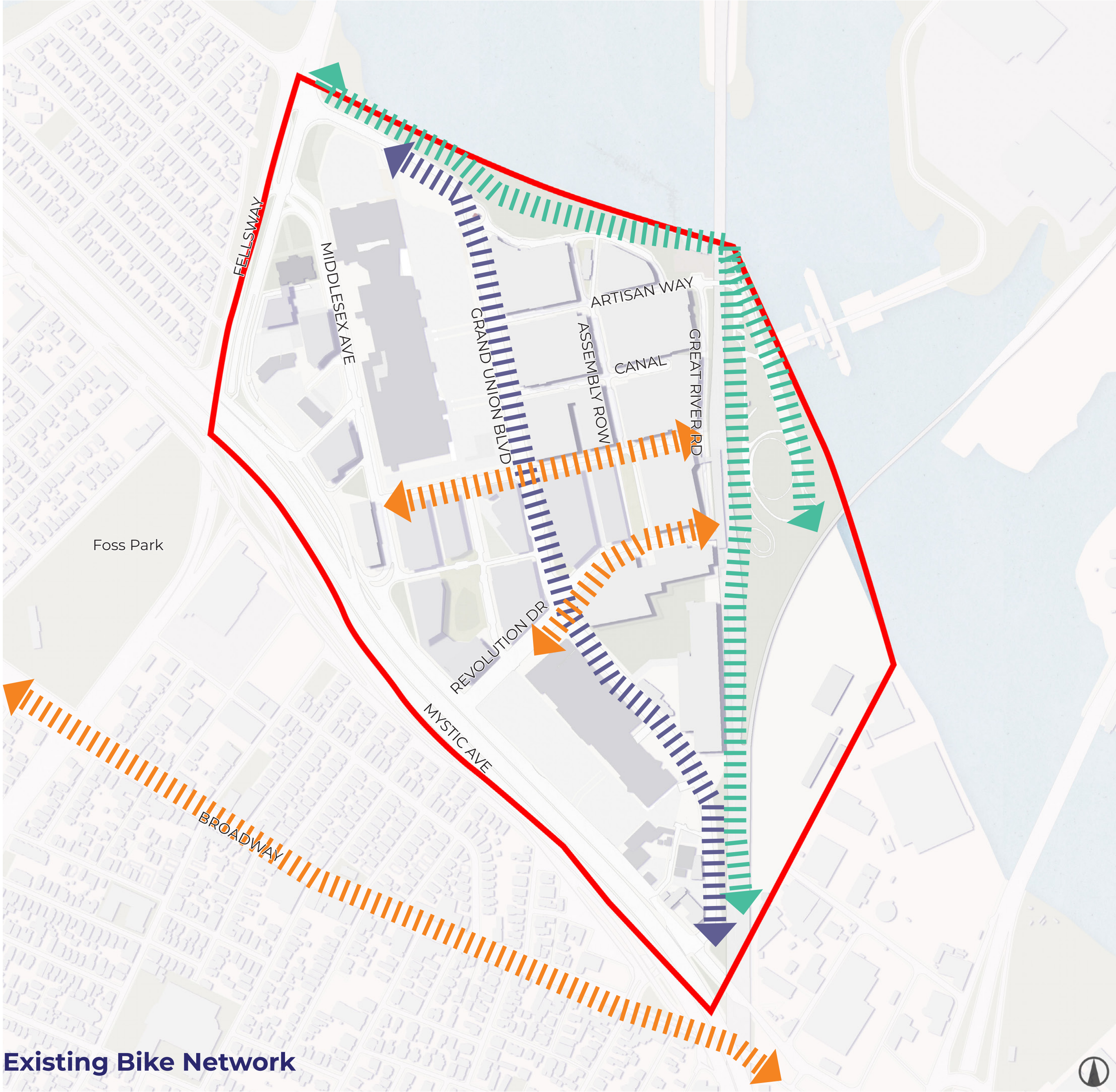
The proposed design extends the existing urban fabric of Assembly Square to the west of Grand Union Boulevard. Its streets are well-defined by trees, active building facades, and pedestrian activity. The new grid will allow the Marketplace area to uphold this standard by reducing physical barriers to pedestrian activity, providing more direct paths to destinations, and generally paving the way for a more human-scale environment.

BICYCLE NETWORK IMPROVEMENTS

Existing Bike Network

The bicycle network in Assembly Square currently has basic bike lanes along Grand Union Boulevard, Foley Street, and Revolution Drive. In addition, there are shared-use paths along the waterfront parks. Otherwise, bikes travel within the travel lanes.

🟥 Site Boundary
🟩 Shared Use Path
🟧 Basic Bike Lane
🟪 Flexpost-protected Bike Lane

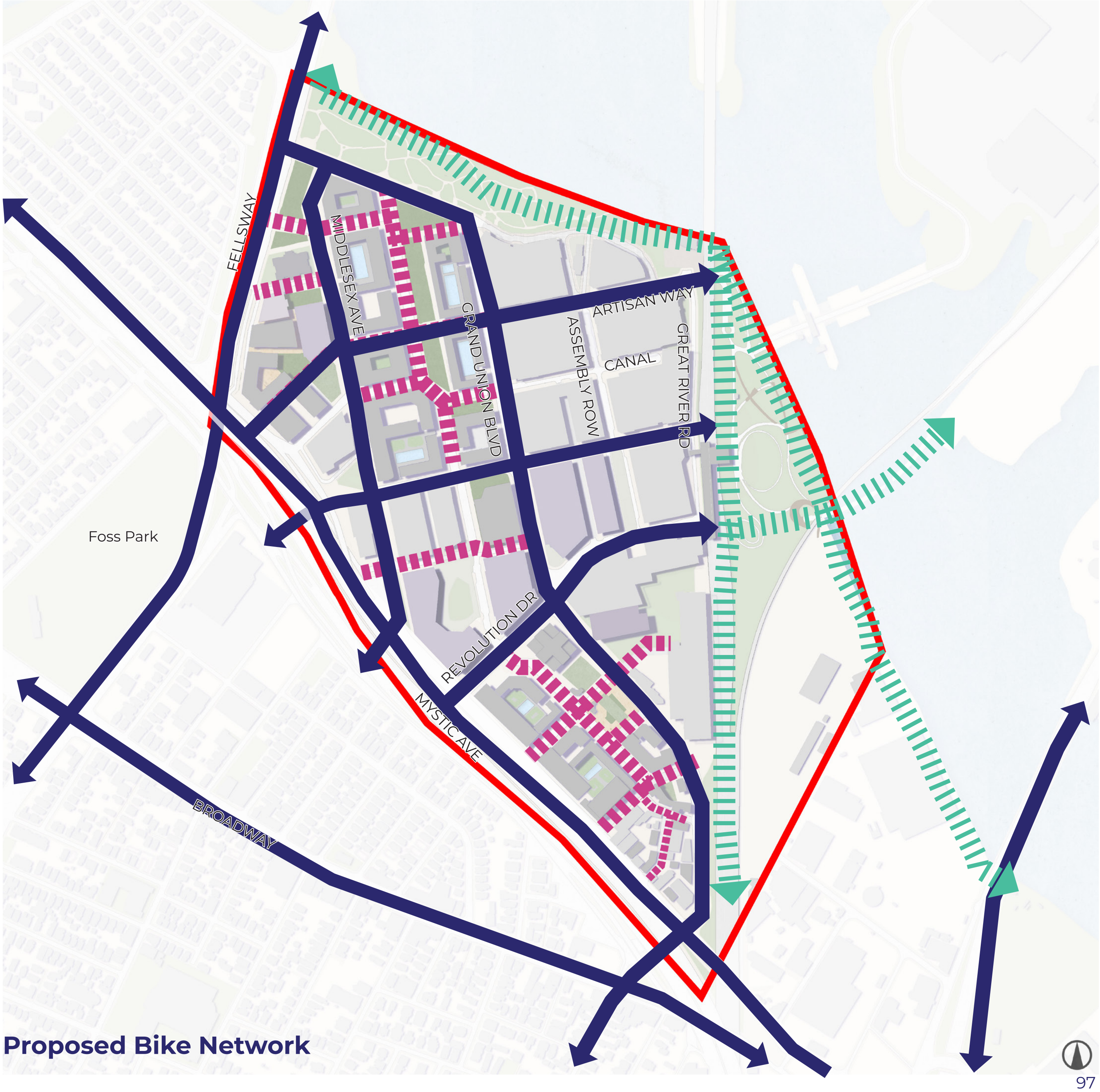

FELLSWAY
MIDDLESEX AVE
GRAND UNION BLVD
ARTISAN WAY
ASSEMBLY ROW
CANAL
GREAT RIVER RD
REVOLUTION DR
MYSTIC AVE
BROADWAY
Foss Park

Existing Bike Network

Proposed Bike Network

This plan coordinates with the City's Bicycle Network Plan and proposes additional shared-use paths that extend from the riverfront parks to connect across the river and further to the protected bike lanes on Alford Street in Everett. Grand Union Boulevard, Foley Street, Middlesex Avenue, Mystic Avenue, and Fellsway will all have protected bike lanes. A new street grid throughout the neighborhood will also provide additional low-speed mobility paths.

🟥 Site Boundary
🟩 Shared Use Path
🟪 New Street Grid
■ Protected Bike Lane


FELLSWAY
MIDDLESEX AVE
GRAND UNION BLVD
ARTISAN WAY
ASSEMBLY ROW
CANAL
GREAT RIVER RD
Foss Park
REVOLUTION DR
MYSTIC AVE
BROADWAY

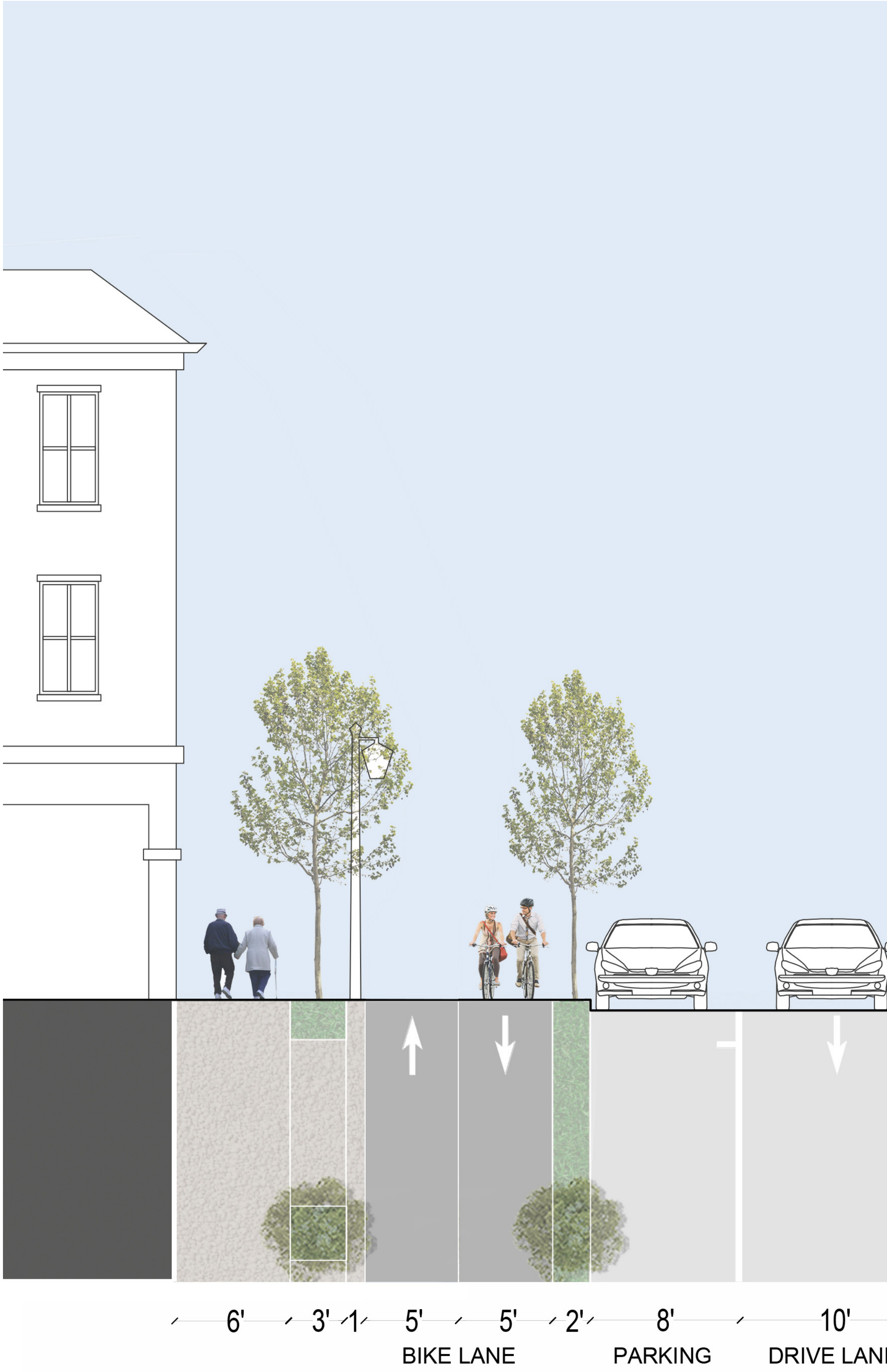
Proposed Bike Network

STREET SECTIONS

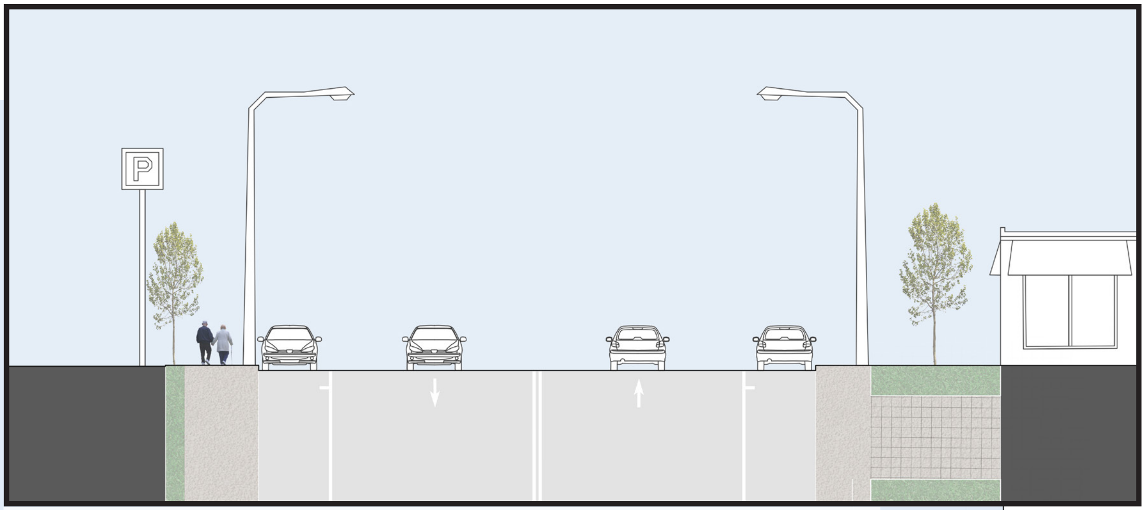
The following proposed street sections illustrate potential ways to reallocate existing roadway space to improve bicycle and pedestrian access and safety throughout the Assembly Square neighborhood.

MIDDLESEX AVENUE STREET SECTION

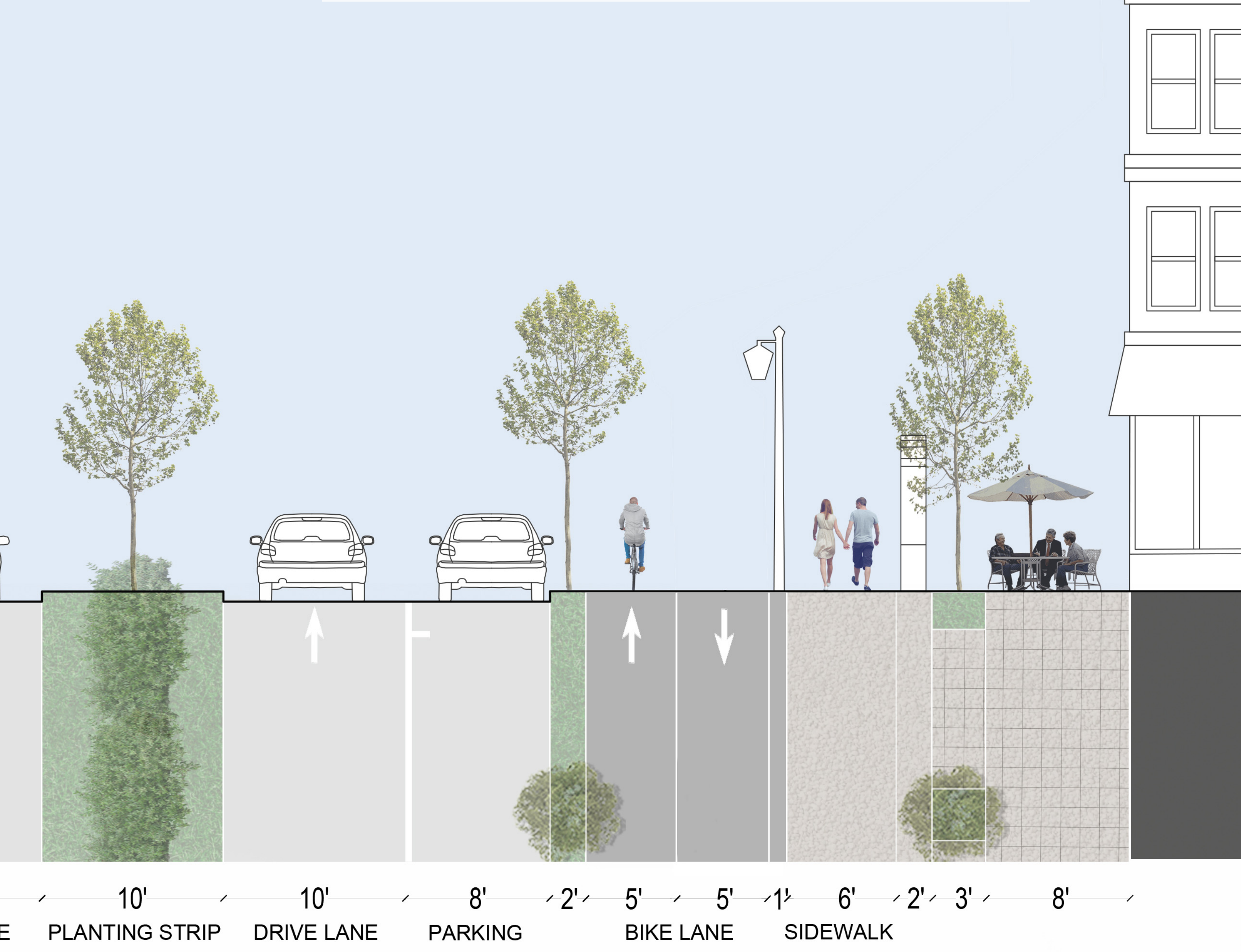
The long-term street section design recommendations for Middlesex Avenue propose the transformation of overly wide lanes and uninviting pedestrian facilities into a street with narrower lanes, on-street parking, and ample space for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. The design also introduces a tree-lined median that can serve as pedestrian islands at intersection crossings or as a center turn lane when needed.



Possible long-term street section design



Existing street section

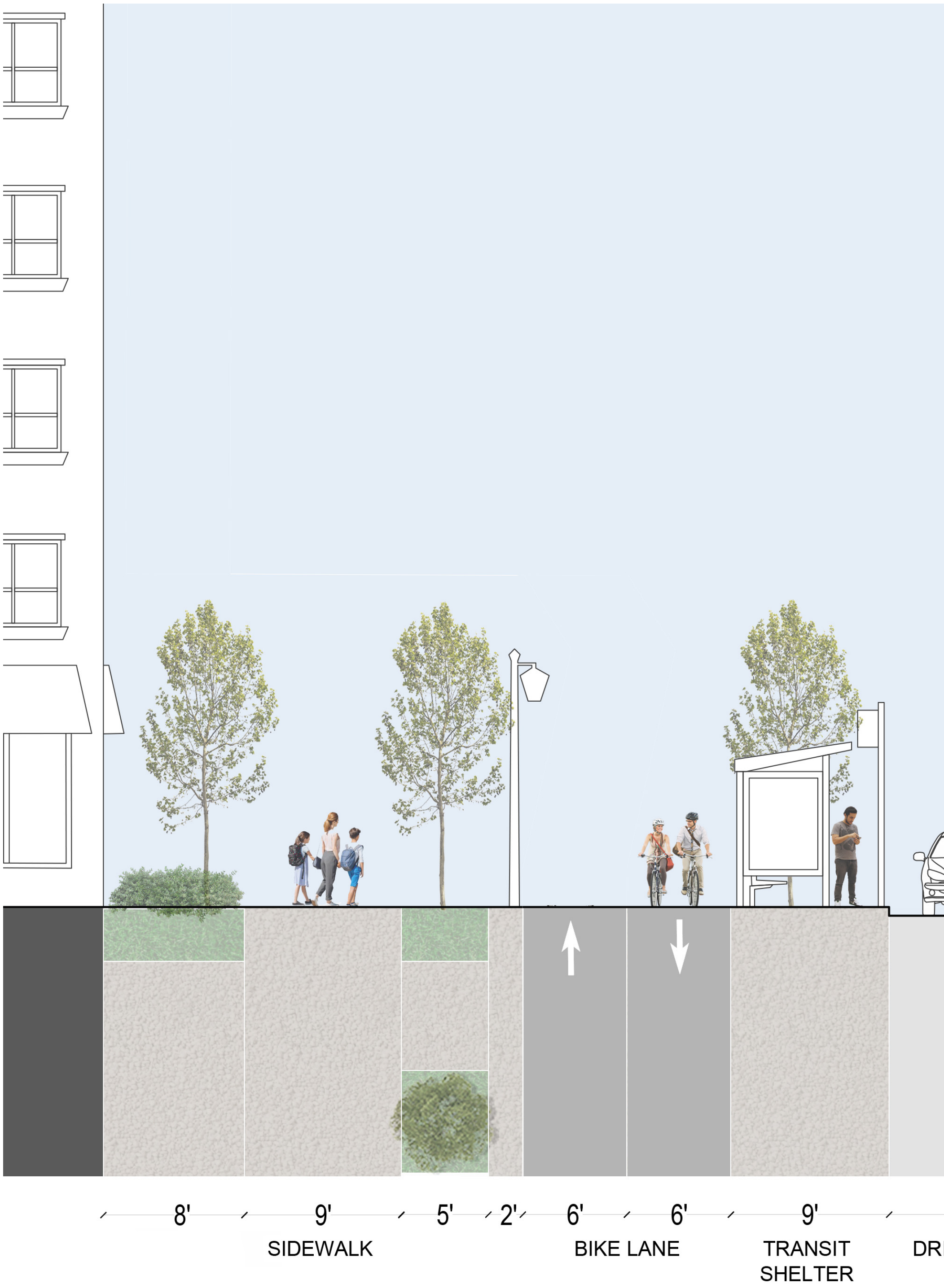

10'
10'
8'
2'
5'
5'
1'
6'
2'
3'
8'
E
PLANTING STRIP
DRIVE LANE
PARKING
BIKE LANE
SIDEWALK

GRAND UNION BOULEVARD STREET SECTION

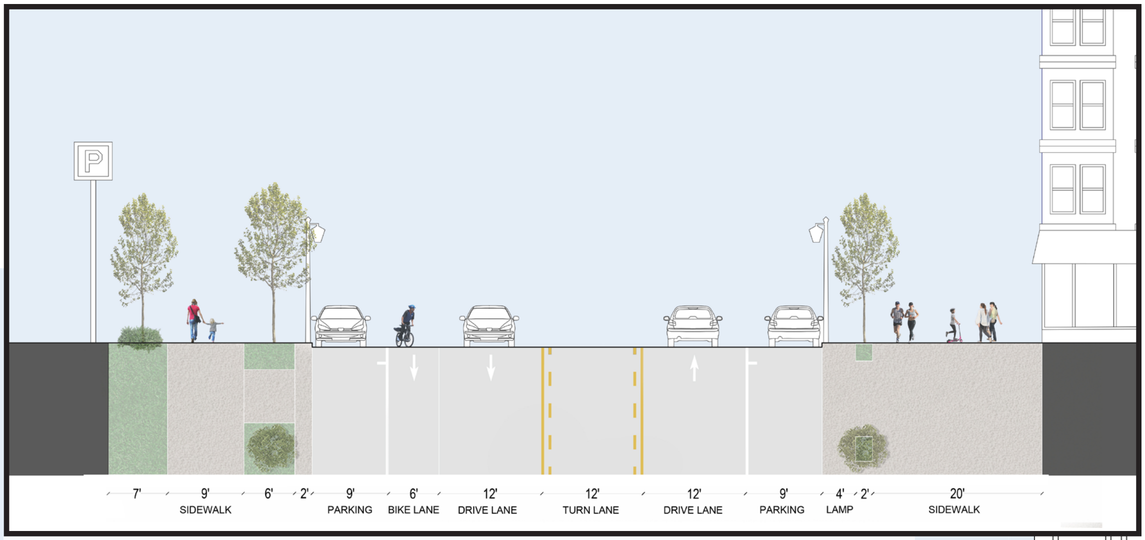
Grand Union Boulevard will remain one of the most important streets in the Assembly Square neighborhood network.

The boulevard currently has a continuous turning lane, a 12-foot travel lane in each direction, 9-foot on-street parking stalls and a basic bike lane in one direction.

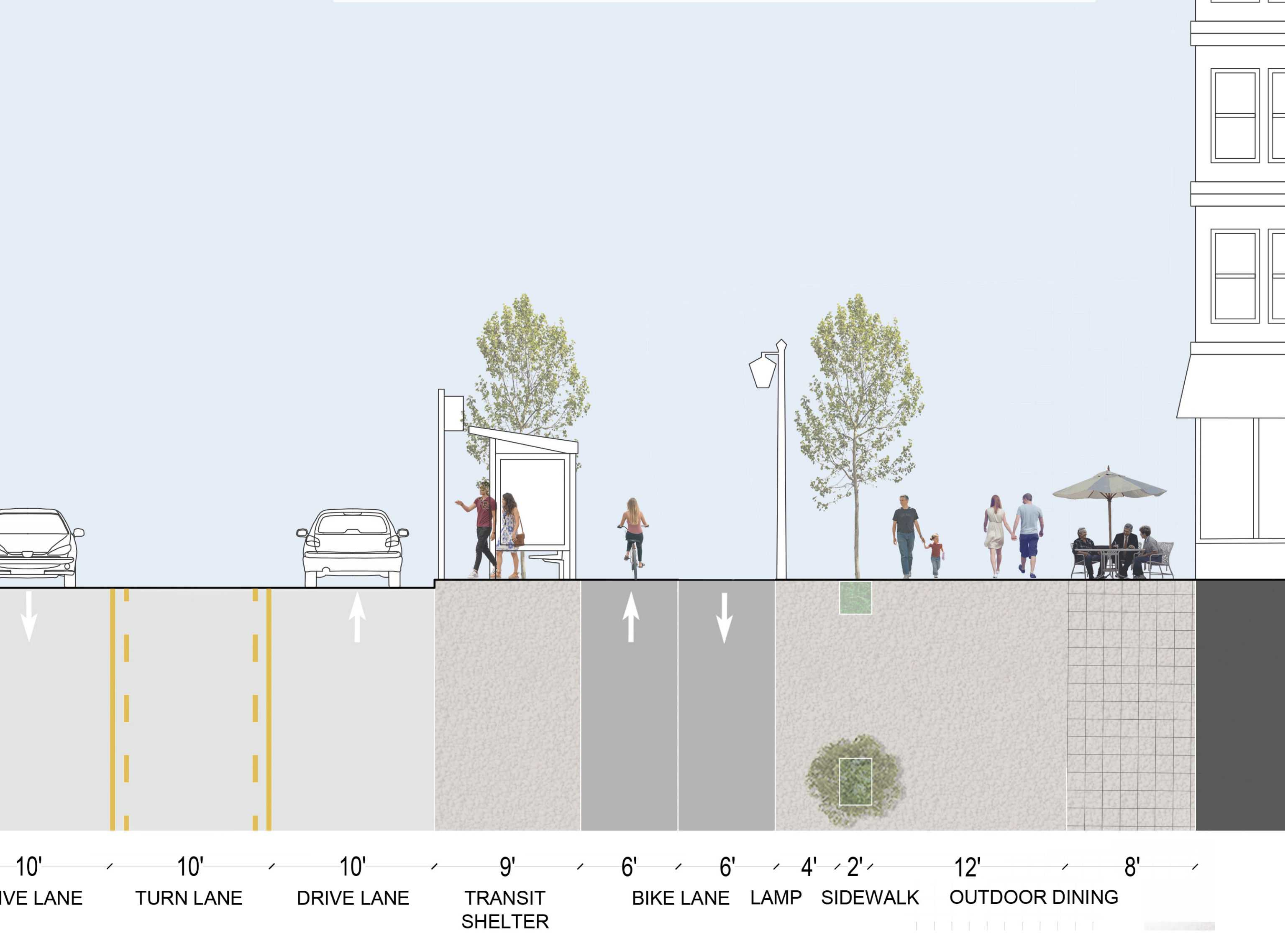
The proposed changes reduce travel lane widths to accommodate a more formal design solution, incorporating a two-way protected bike lane into the sidewalk (in both directions), street trees, and transit shelters for local bus stops.



Potential long-term street section design


P
7'
9'
SIDEWALK
6'
2'
9'
PARKING
6'
BIKE LANE
12'
DRIVE LANE
12'
TURN LANE
12'
DRIVE LANE
9'
PARKING
4'
LAMP
2'
20'
SIDEWALK

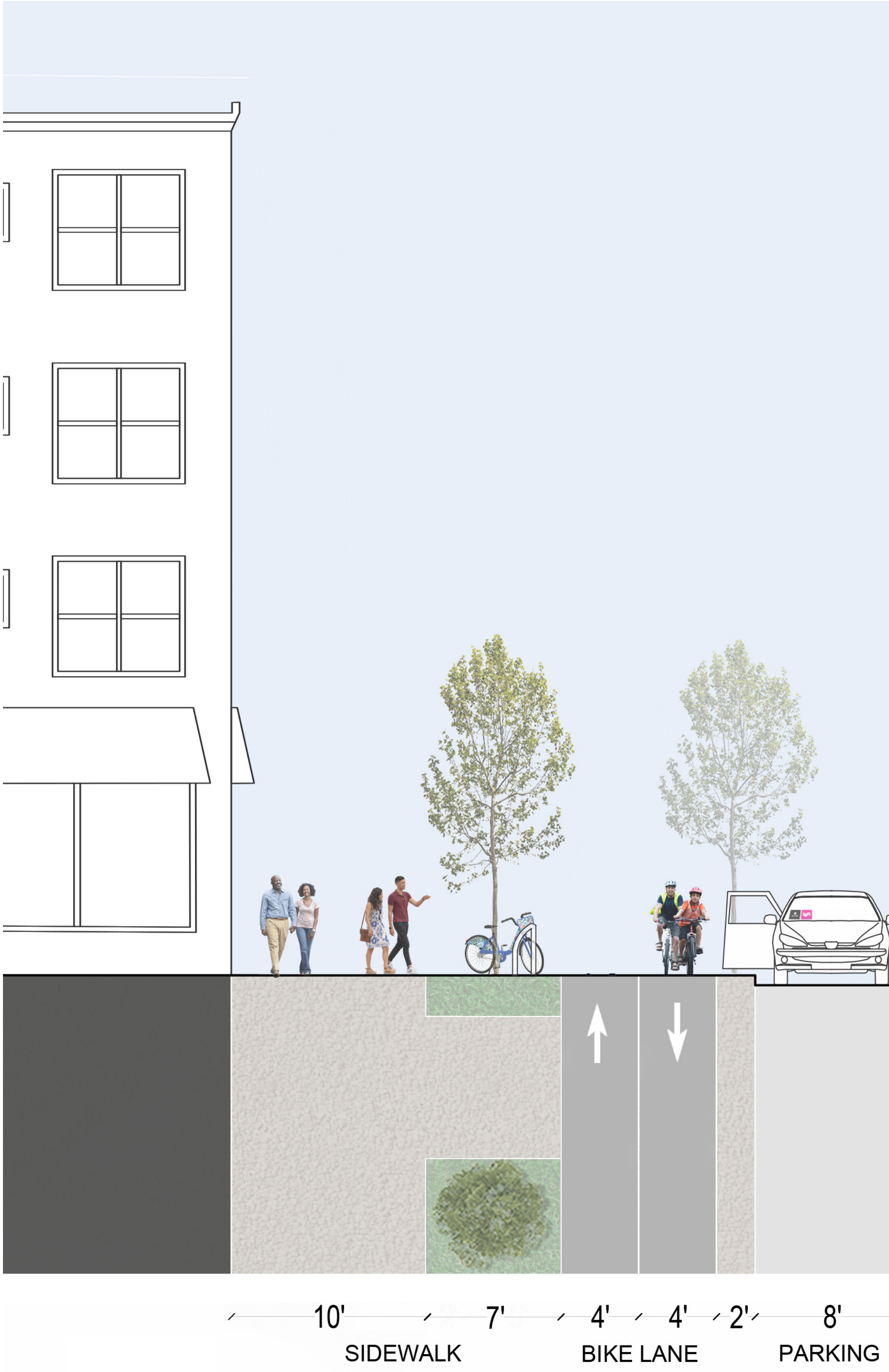
Existing street section


10'
IVE LANE
10'
TURN LANE
10'
DRIVE LANE
9'
TRANSIT SHELTER
6'
6'
BIKE LANE
4'
LAMP
2'
12'
SIDEWALK
8'
OUTDOOR DINING

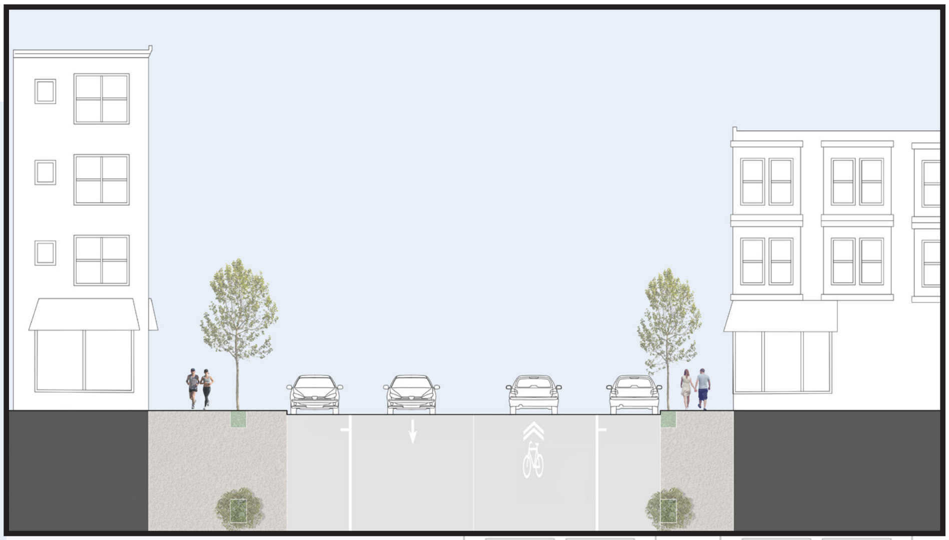
FOLEY STREET SECTION

Foley Street currently has wide, 15-foot travel lanes. Cyclists share the lane with motor vehicles.

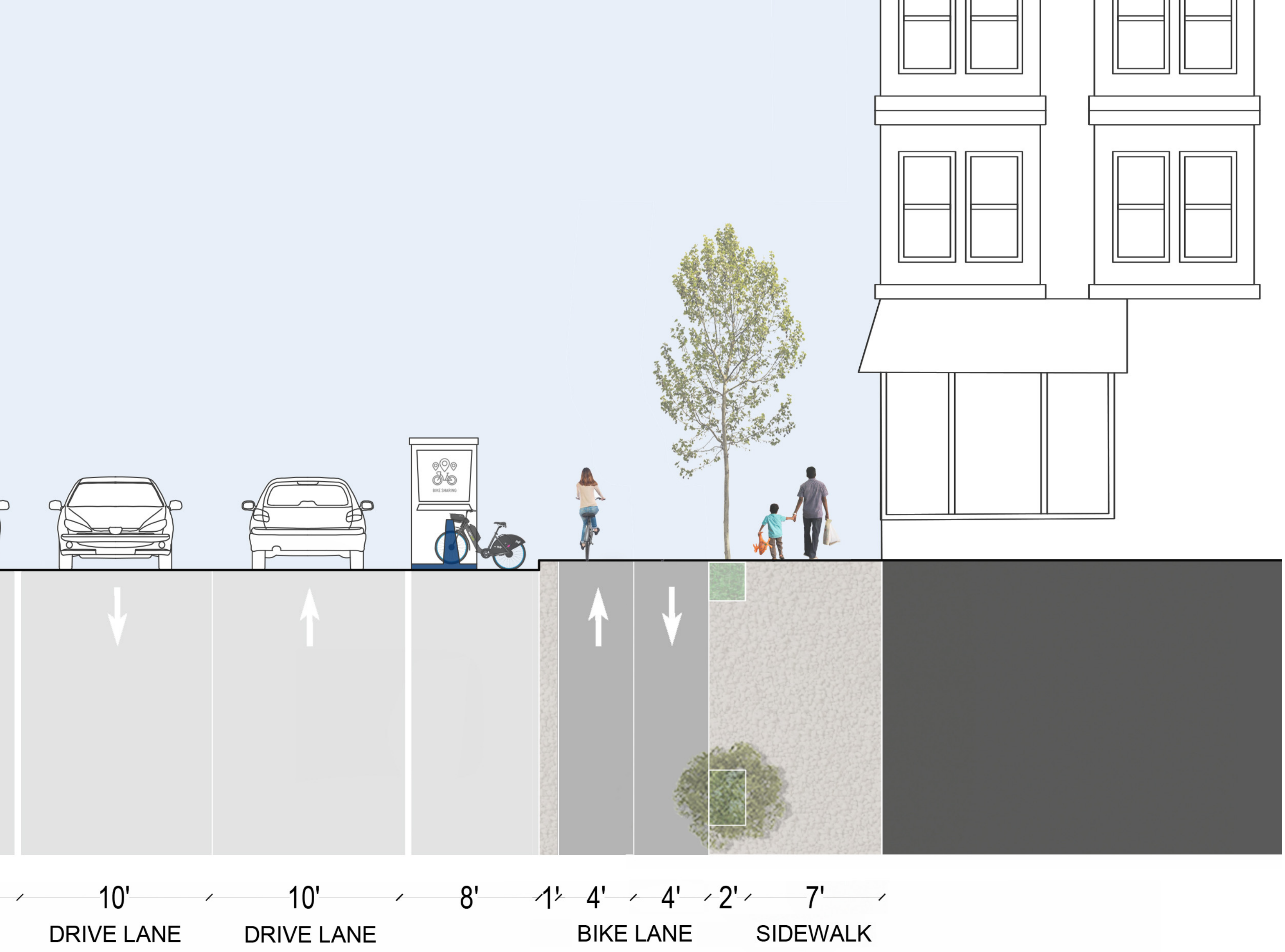
The long-term design envisions a sidewalk-level protected bike lane as well as curbside lanes for uses such as parking, rideshare pick-up zones and bike corrals.



Long-term street section design



Existing street section


10'
DRIVE LANE
10'
DRIVE LANE
8'
1'
4'
4'
BIKE LANE
2'
7'
SIDEWALK

MODE SPLIT AND LOADING

With the appropriate development and transportation interventions, the City can help shift modes of travel from motor vehicles to walking, biking, and public transit. Our goal is that 75% of trips to and from the Assembly Square neighborhood will not involve a single-occupancy vehicle.

Consider the current and aspirational mode splits for trips to and from the Assembly Square neighborhood that are shown below.

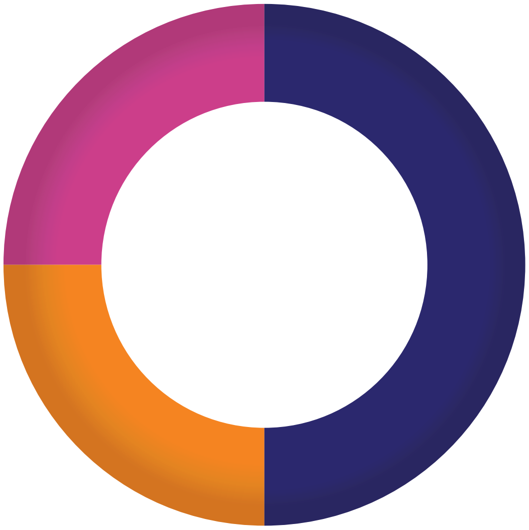
CURRENT MODE SPLIT

The current mode split in Assembly Square shows that approximately 50% of all trips are made by motor vehicle, 10% of trips are bicycle and pedestrian, and the remainder via transit services.

	VEHICLE	TRANSIT	BIKE/WALK
RESIDENTIAL	43%	47%	10%
RETAIL	50%	25%	10%
OFFICE	54%	36%	10%

ASPIRATIONAL MODE SPLIT

The aspirational mode split would increase transit trips to 50% and biking and walking to 25%—thereby reducing motor vehicle trips to 25%.



Basic bike lane in Somerville

Bluebikes dock at Assembly Station

Assembly Row loading

Grand Union Boulevard

NEW DAILY AVERAGE TRIPS

There will be new average daily trips associated with the proposed development density in Assembly Square. Many community members and stakeholders expressed interest in having Assembly Square be a place where trips between different land uses are generated by site development. These internal trips were included in the analysis of new daily trips to reflect these travel patterns.

LOADING

Assembly Square has many internal loading areas, primarily in the Assembly Row portion of the neighborhood. There are existing external loading areas on the west side of Assembly Square, primarily at the Assembly Marketplace and Home Depot sites as well as businesses on Middlesex Avenue. As Assembly Square continues to develop, loading should be internal to all new buildings to improve the safety and comfort for all users. Several developments have already incorporated this into building plans.

	INTERNAL CAPTURE			
	MULTIFAMILY HOUSING (MID-RISE)	OFFICE BUILDING	SHOPPING CENTER	TOTAL
AUTO (VPD)	2,250	10,878	14,002	27,130
TRANSIT (PPD)	5,055	24,448	48,532	78,035
WALK/BIKE (PPD)	2,528	12,225	24,267	39,020

* vpd = vehicles per day; ppd = persons per day

TRANSIT

POTENTIAL TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS

The design team explored additional transit service possibilities to better connect Assembly Square to the rest of Somerville. Three bus routes were identified that could provide service between Porter Square and Assembly Square. The routes shown in Options 1 and 2 could potentially be modified to remove redundancies and ensure that the existing bus route 90 serves more of the Somerville area. The city will make these receommendations to the MBTA.

Option 1 (Orange)

Like other existing bus routes, this route would follow Somerville Avenue and Washington Street, but it would provide a more direct east–west link across Somerville. This route would stop at Sullivan Square to connect to the MBTA Orange Line.

This route would also pass through Union Square, connecting Assembly Square with the new Union Square MBTA station on the Green Line Extension.

Lastly, this route would cross the Fellsway Bridge to connect with the Wellington neighborhood at a more local level. At present, the only connection across the Mystic River is on the MBTA Orange Line.

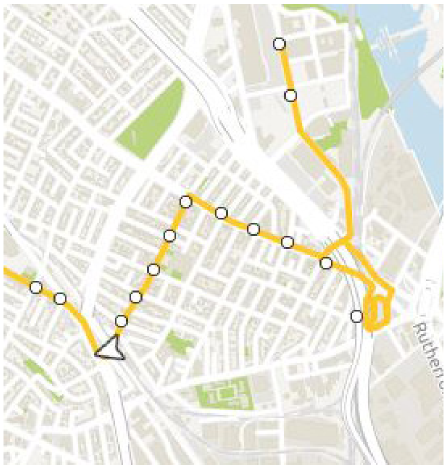
Option 2 (Pink)

This route would also start out on Somerville Avenue and pass through the Union Square area, but it would go through East Somerville as it approaches Assembly Square. This route would help residents adjacent to Assembly Square make a safer, less stressful connection across I-93 and Mystic Avenue. In order to maintain an existing MBTA Orange Line connection, this proposed option would pass by Assembly Station instead of Sullivan Square Station.

Option 3 (Green)

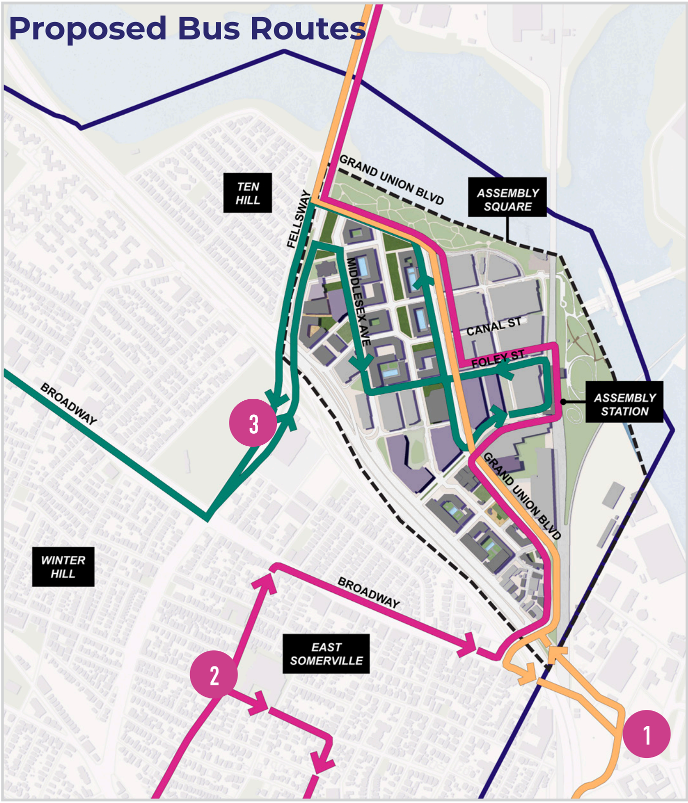
This route is a more local neighborhood option that would pass through the Winter Hill area of Somerville via Broadway and Central Street. Connections with the MBTA Orange Line would be made at Assembly Station. The Winter Hill neighborhood currently has two buses running along Broadway which terminate at Sullivan Square; therefore, to reach Assembly Square they would have to make a connection. This route alternative would give residents a direct east–west connection across I-93 and Mystic Avenue. This alternative also would also circulate around the Assembly Square development, providing access to more of the new buildings.

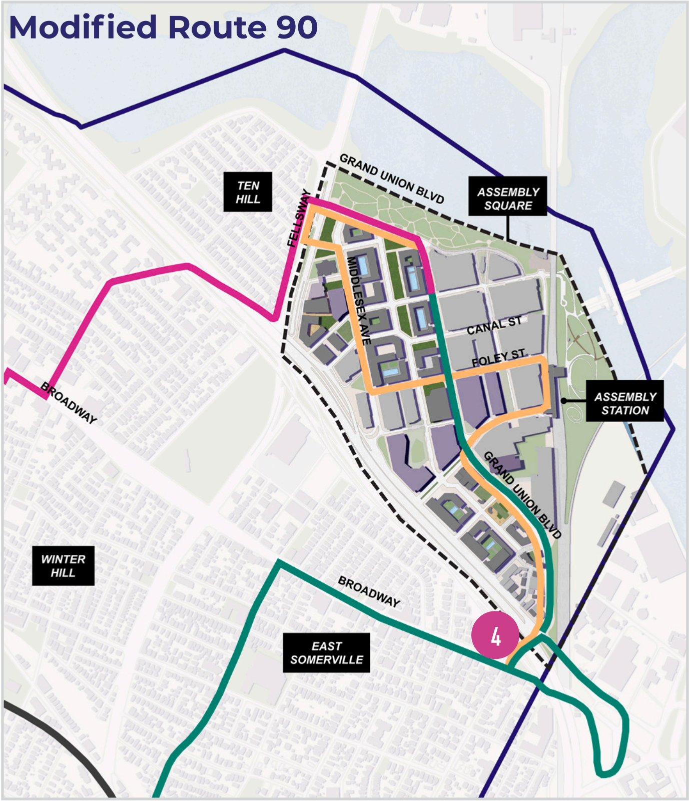
MBTA Route 90 Bus to Davis Square



MBTA Route 90

MBTA Orange Line


Proposed Bus Routes
TEN HILL
GRAND UNION BLVD
ASSEMBLY SQUARE
FELLSWAY
MIDDLESEX AVE
CANAL ST
FOLEY ST.
ASSEMBLY STATION
BROADWAY
3
GRAND UNION BLVD
WINTER HILL
BROADWAY
EAST SOMERVILLE
2
1


Modified Route 90
TEN HILL
GRAND UNION BLVD
ASSEMBLY SQUARE
FELLSWAY
MIDDLESEX AVE
CANAL ST
FOLEY ST.
ASSEMBLY STATION
BROADWAY
GRAND UNION BLVD
WINTER HILL
BROADWAY
EAST SOMERVILLE
4

① Route 1: Following Somerville Avenue and Washington Street

② Route 2: Somerville Avenue, through Union Square and East Somerville

③ Route 3: Local route through Winter Hill via Broadway and Central Street

④ Route 90 Modifications

ROUTE 90 MODIFICATIONS

Option 1 (Orange)

This modification would coordinate well with the proposed new bus route Option 1. If a connection between Sullivan Square and Assembly Square is made via the new proposed route, the existing bus route 90 could cut out Sullivan Square and instead connect with the MBTA Orange Line at Assembly Station. If the proposed new route is Option 2 or 3, cutting Sullivan Square Station from bus route 90 is not as strongly recommended, since it provides at least one link between Sullivan Square Station and Assembly Square via the street network.

Option 2 (Pink)

This variation would work well if proposed in coordination with the new bus route Options 1 or 2 that pass through East Somerville, serving different areas of the city. This route would provide additional access to the Winter Hill neighborhood on select outbound buses during the day while still maintaining the existing bus route 90 at all other times. The route would take Temple Street, Broadway, and School Street to get back on Highland Avenue in the outbound direction.

TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Transportation demand management (TDM) promotes increased commuting via public transportation, cycling and walking, and decreased commuting via single-occupancy motor vehicle. By providing incentives and/or discouraging different features, TDM aims to modify travel behavior to improve broader goals such as the livability of a community, automobile congestion, environmental concerns, and transportation equity.

BASELINE REQUIREMENTS

Current development proponents are required to join Assembly Connect, Assembly Square's Transportation Management Association (TMA). Future development should also be required to participate in Assembly Connect with a designated coordinator to decrease reliance on single-occupancy motor vehicle use in the neighborhood. Per city policy, all developments for the City of Somerville are required to have a Mobility Management Plan. Property owners of buildings with 50,000 square feet or more of commercial space and multi-tenant buildings where the tenants, in combination, have 50 or more employees are required to provide the following for their tenants:

- An on-site transportation coordinator for the building;
- An annual mobility management educational meeting for tenants and their employees;
- Posted and distributed mobility management information; and
- Unbundled parking (spaces rented, leased or sold as an option rather than a requirement).

These owners must also require future tenants to provide the following through lease agreements:

- Qualified transportation fringe benefits for employees; and
- A guaranteed ride home program for employees.

Employers (future tenants) with 50 or more employees are required to provide the following:

- An on-site transportation coordinator for the business;
- An annual mobility management education meeting for employees;
- Posted and distributed mobility management information;
- Qualified transportation fringe benefits for employees; and
- A guaranteed ride home program for employees.

The property owner of a commercial parking facility is required to provide the following:

- Preferential parking locations for carpool/vanpool vehicles; and
- Posted mobility management information.

The property owner of a residential building with 20 or more dwelling units is required to provide the following:

- Posted mobility management information;
- Distributed mobility management information; and
- Unbundled parking.
- Covered bicycle storage and bicycle parking

Existing Bluebikes Station

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The City of Somerville recommends additional TDM elements that proponents of new developments within the Assembly Square neighborhood should consider to encourage active and high-occupancy transportation options and discourage single-occupancy motor vehicle usage. For commercial developments, these additional measures include:

- Subsidized transit passes for all employees;
- Subsidized bike share memberships for employees;
- Subsidized car share memberships for employees;
- Public parking offered at market rate prices; and
- Any reserved employee parking offered at market rate unbundled from employment agreements.

For residential developments, these include:

- Subsidized transit passes for the first 1–12 months of tenancy;
- Subsidized bike share memberships for the first year of tenancy; and
- Subsidized car share memberships for the first 1–12 months of tenancy.

Increasing the price of parking, creating a pricing structure for parking at all Assembly Square parking locations, and eliminating free parking on public lots may promote the use of transit, walking, and biking instead of driving. One study found that the Assembly Station on the MBTA Orange Line generates 5,000 trips but could have created 10,000 trips if there was less parking available in the area. Free parking on public lots can be eliminated.

Character of the neighborhood

Transit Screens

Kendall/MIT
Alewife
1
Ashmont
3
Braintree
6
Vassar St at Mass Ave
Tech Shuttle (To Kendall Square)
10
Sullivan Station via Kendall/MIT - Limited Stops
22
Vassar St at Mass Ave
Ruggles via Kendall/MIT - Limited Stops
6
1
Dudley Station via Mass. Ave.
5
Saferide Boston All (To Boston)
16
Saferide Cambridge All (from Campus)
19
CT1
Boston Medical Center (Limited Stops)
20
Saferide Boston All
35
1
Harvard Station via Mass. Ave.
0
CT1
Central Square (Limited Stops)
3
MIT
TransitScreen
Hubway

MICROMOBILITY + PARKING

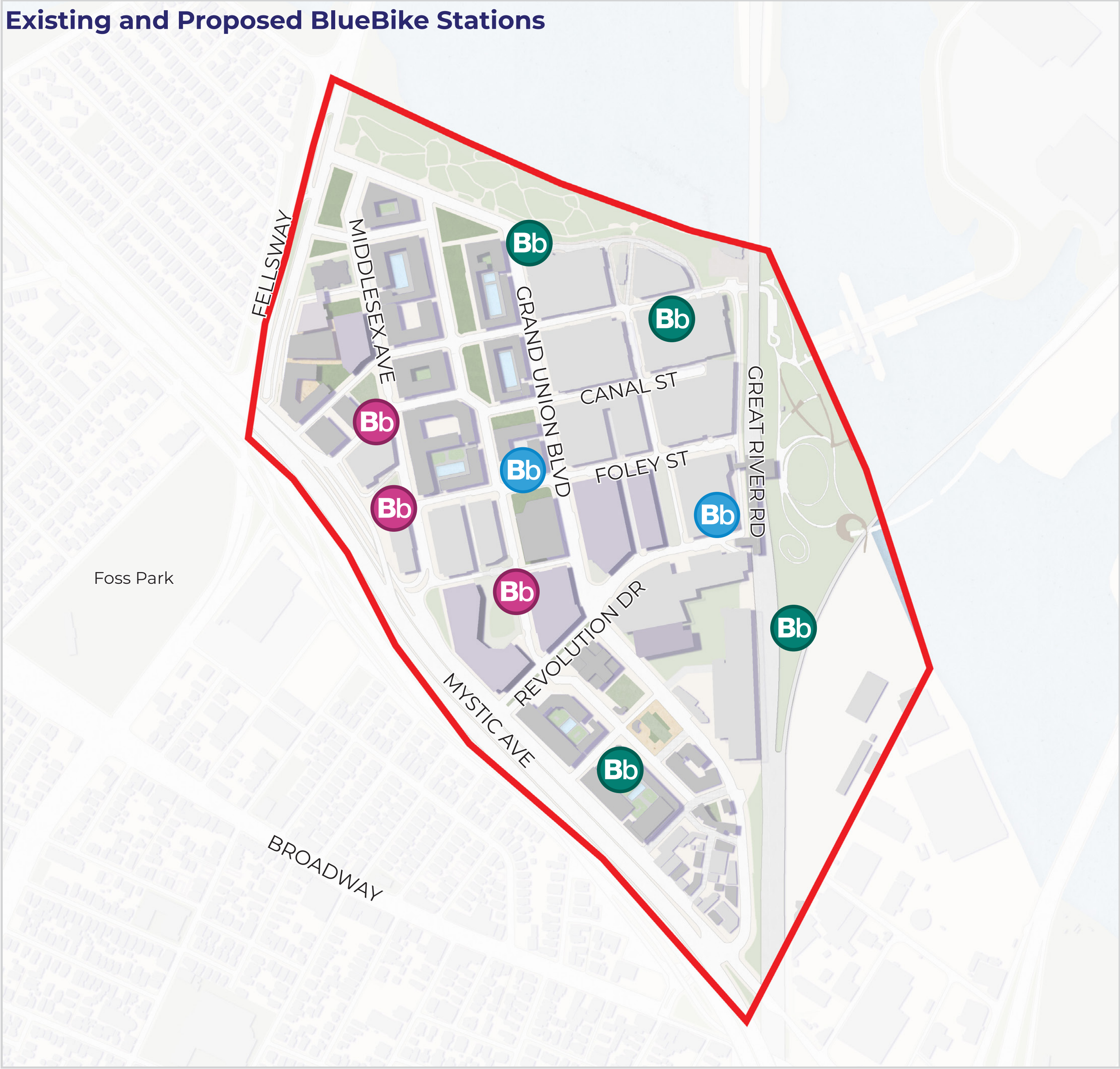
MICROMOBILITY

The City of Somerville has already authorized Bluebikes locations within the Assembly Square neighborhood. The locations offer the opportunity to incorporate future development plans into the locations of Bluebikes stations as Assembly Square continues to redevelop. Micromobility includes options like Zipcar spaces, electric vehicle charging stations, or e-bikes and scooter charging stations that could be included in development mitigation efforts.

Bb Existing Bluebikes

Bb Planned Expansion

Bb Future Planning Options



Existing and Proposed BlueBike Stations

FELLSWAY
MIDDLESEX AVE
GRAND UNION BLVD
CANAL ST
FOLEY ST
GREAT RIVER RD
REVOLUTION DR
MYSTIC AVE
Foss Park
BROADWAY
Bb

PARKING PARADIGM SHIFT

The future of Assembly Square is one with less parking.

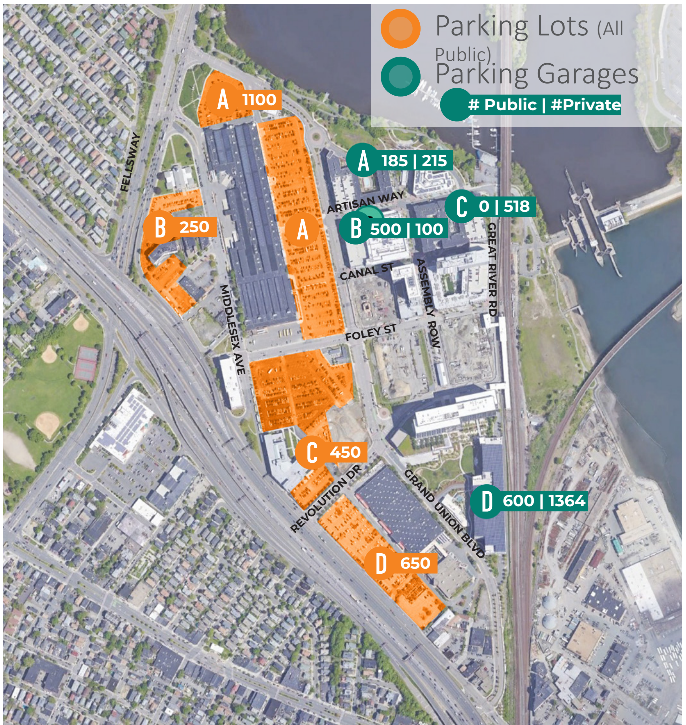
Building more roads and vehicle lanes correlates with people using them more, which generates more traffic. When a free or cheap amenity such as more road space is made available, it generally alleviates congestion in the short term but creates greater demand in the long term. Parking follows a similar trend. Providing more parking, especially free parking, creates more parking demand and causes increased traffic congestion (as vehicles circle to find spaces). A survey on emerging parking trends by the International Parking Institute noted that “it’s estimated that 30% of the traffic in any city is people in cars searching for parking.” Furthermore, when free parking is available, people tend to drive around for longer periods of time to find an available spot rather than pay for garage parking. The bottom line is that people always seek the most convenient way to access their destinations; when parking is free and accessible, it can become preferred over modes such as transit, walking, and cycling.

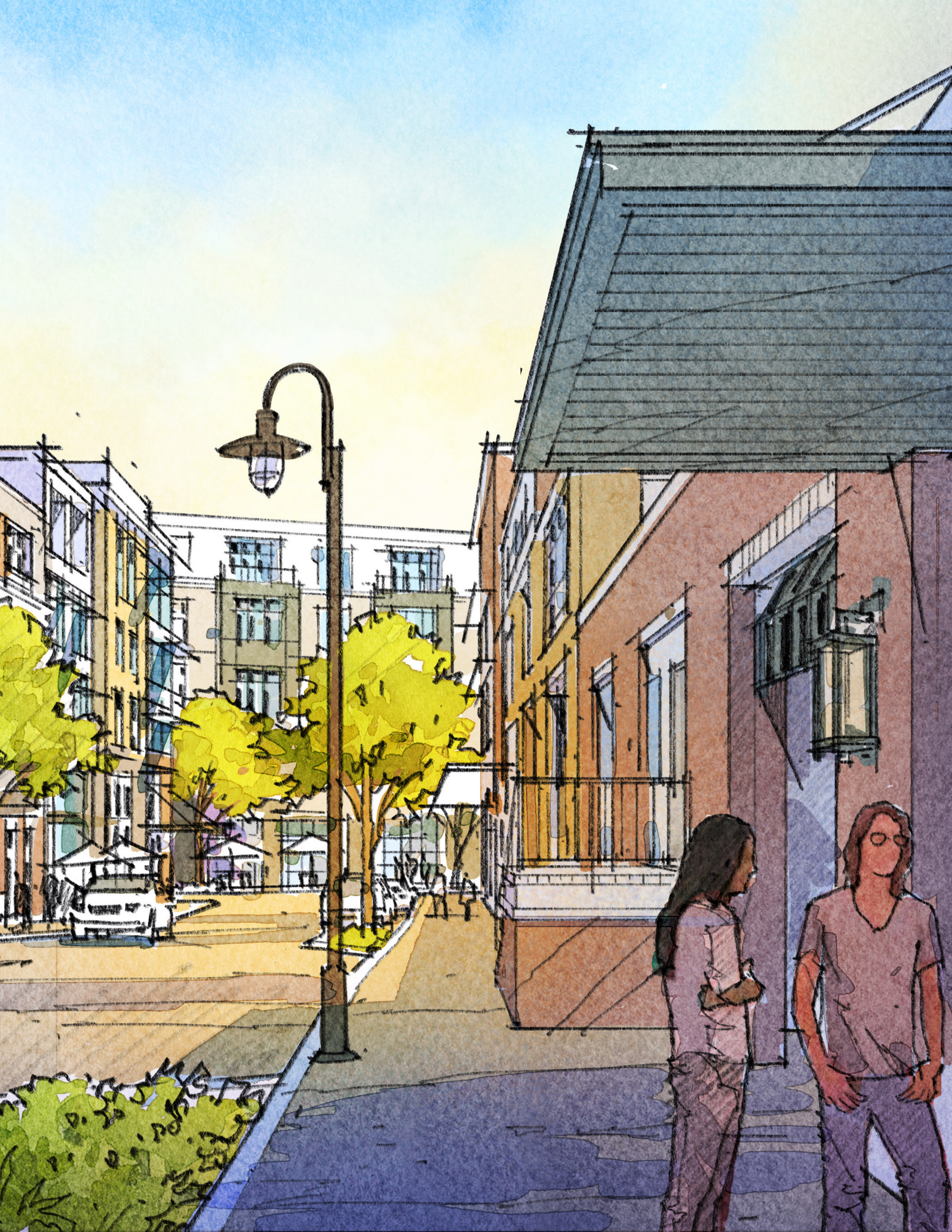
Most travel to Assembly Square is by single-occupancy motor vehicle. The greatest determinant of a driver’s mode choice is free parking. Assembly Square has a substantial amount of free or inexpensive public parking which encourages vehicle travel to the neighborhood. Several plans for continuing development in Assembly Square include additional off-street parking. No new parking should be permitted that is visible from public spaces or streets.

Recommendations for retail and office development include increasing the price of parking to market rate to discourage vehicle travel and continuing parking maximums with new development. Parking for residential development should be unbundled to encourage a shift to other modes of transportation. This may also decrease the need for parking; some residents may not own a car and do not need a parking space. New development should also contribute to TDM efforts required and suggested by Assembly Connect. This includes electric vehicle parking, vehicle share/carpool programs, Bluebikes, and shared mobility programs.

The City should coordinate and work with the TMA (Assembly Connect) to establish an overall cap on additional permitting of parking spaces.

Existing parking





6. Economics

Assembly Square is Somerville's largest commercial district (145 acres) and is on a short list of sites with the greatest potential for development in the Metro Boston Area.

POLICY REVIEW

Assembly Square is one of the premier development sites in New England. Following an earlier plan for the neighborhood, the development at Assembly Row has been very successful with retail spaces fully leased with a mix of national and local tenants and residential units leasing and selling well. Eight development blocks have been built, generating 860,000 square feet of office space, 500,000 square feet of retail, restaurant, and entertainment space, and over 1,000 new residential units.

The development is anchored by the 750,000-square-foot headquarters for Mass General Brigham , the state's largest health care system and employer. The move to Assembly Row consolidated a dozen facilities around Boston under one roof in a state-of-the-art, signature building. Today, 4,500 employees work at the headquarters, with the opportunity to expand and build a new 400,000-square-foot building in the future.

Assembly Square's developers and Somerville's planners are committed to using their substantial experience to drive economic growth for Somerville that pays for itself. They want to achieve and maintain a proven avenue of job growth in health care, climate tech, biomedical, and life sciences industries as well as the general technology sector. Similarly, neighborhood residents and other key business stakeholders are broadly concerned with improving livability and equity for residents through policies that support employment and encourage sustainable growth.

STRENGTHS

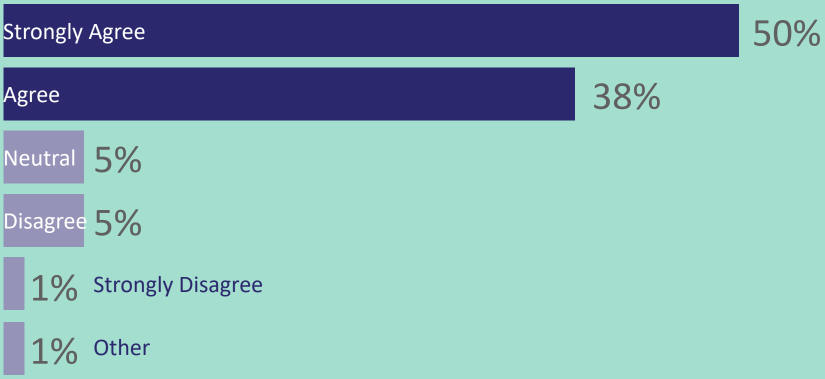
Assembly Square has inherent strengths that served it well through the pandemic recovery phase and during continued development. Brokers and investors say there are four elements that bode well for greater economic development over the next decade:

1. Half the city's residents are young (although the median age is creeping upwards) and highly educated in key sectors.
2. There is sufficient parking and access to Boston/Cambridge via public transit.
3. Urban amenities are increasing.
4. Prices across all real estate segments and classes are lower relative to nearby urban peers.

Somerville enjoys characteristics that are long-term strengths for the real estate sector, including:

1. A continuous increase in residents who are knowledge workers;
2. A diversified mix of knowledge industries ;
3. Proximity to clients and tenants with limited access to new land or expansion options at their current locations; and
4. Access to a wide range of housing types at a variety of price points.

How likely are you to **recommend** Assembly Square to your friends and family as a place to live?



Results from Assembly Square Resident Survey

Assembly Square's current and future contribution to the tax base is significant. Somerville is well on its way to expanding commercial tax revenues and market values and Assembly Square is leading the way with another 300,000 feet of space under construction. Other discussed projects include a new 180-room hotel, a 210-unit residential building, and a planned 1.4-million-square-foot mixed-use development along Middlesex Avenue. The broadened tax base from Assembly Square makes this development a critical tax engine for the entire City.

From a municipal finance perspective, the neighborhood has been a boon for the City. To date, the District Improvement Financing (DIF)-captured increment has significantly exceeded debt service payment amounts with an anticipated fund balance of $9 million by the end of Fiscal Year 2020 to be used for infrastructure improvements.

Resident survey results show that both renters and owners view Assembly Square as a distinctive neighborhood, and participants express broad satisfaction about living here. Economic development priorities, tools, and objectives can be used to further enhance Assembly Square's livability and extend its integration into the urban fabric of Somerville.

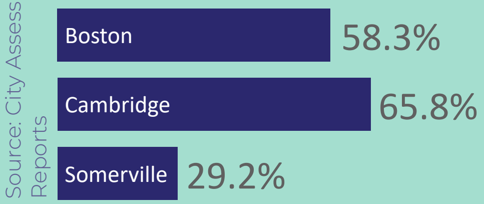
At a time when real estate fundamentals are being reevaluated, Assembly Square's tenants in sectors such as health care, technology, and life science research have been welcome outliers, mitigating some of the downturn experienced elsewhere. Established developers who specialize in providing office, retail, and lab space are drawing new tenants, attracting both investment capital, and innovative office developers. This sustained strength bodes well for the site's long-term occupancy and job creation — and ultimately for population and family growth.

OPPORTUNITIES

Challenges exist for Assembly Square. Consider the following opportunities and areas for improvement:

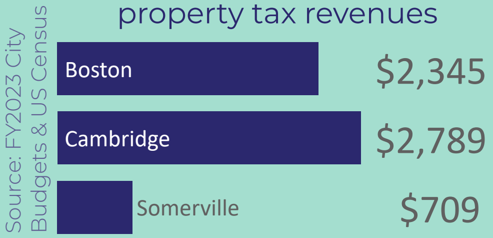
- The real estate use mix is successful but including new options will make it an even more attractive destination.
- Assembly Square works well for its core markets, but it could work for more people.
- It's important to balance job creation and housing, especially units of larger sizes that allow for various household structures.
- Arts and culture could be more deeply interwoven into Assembly Square's economy and lived experiences.
- The environmental effects of cars, traffic and concrete could be softened. This would require thoughtful work at the edges of the area as well as expanding the convenience of other modes of transportation within and across the site.

Proportion of real estate taxes from commercial property



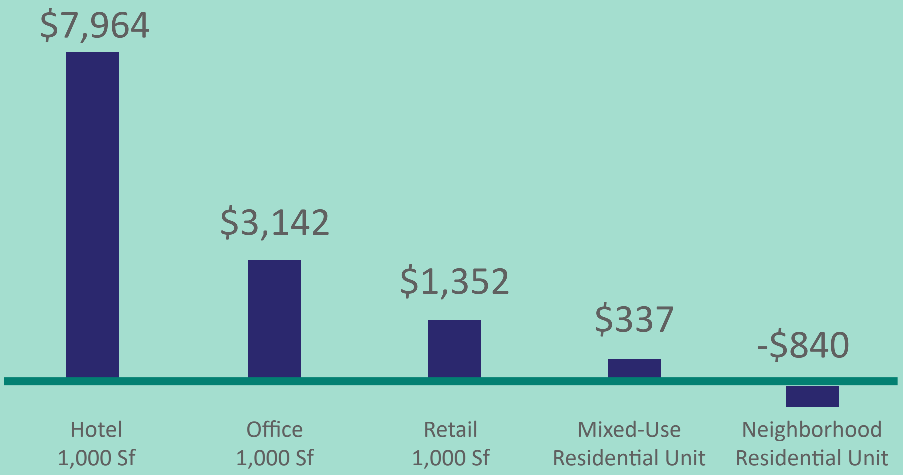
Source: City Assessor Reports

Per-resident commercial property tax revenues



Source: FY2023 City Budgets & US Census

Annual Net Municipal Income by Somerville Land Use



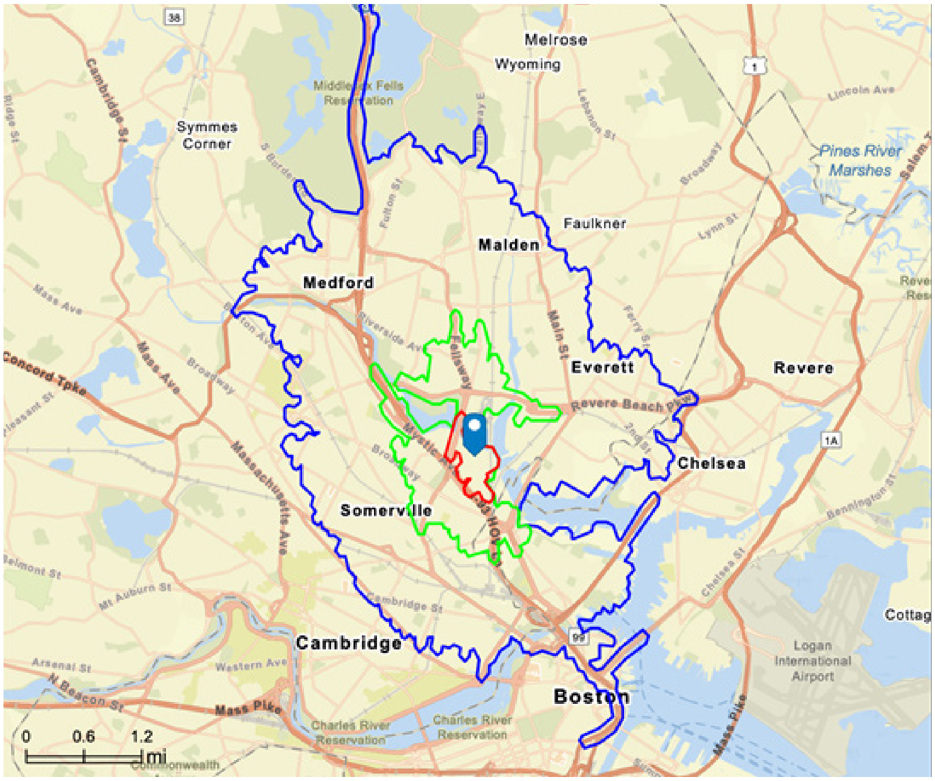
Source: TischlerBise, "Cost of Land Uses Fiscal Impact Analysis
www.thesomervilletimes.com/archives/92309

EFFECTIVE TRADE AREA

Transportation time trade areas are one-way economists and retailers determine where the majority of shoppers will come from for a given retail location. Given a choice, customers will shop at stores that are closest and most convenient to their homes that have the products they want to buy. In evaluating the local capacity to support retail in this location, a two-minute, five-minute, and ten-minutes transportation time trade areas were looked at.

The two-minute transportation time also corresponds with the neighborhood boundaries and is walkable/bikeable from elsewhere in the neighborhood as well as from the MBTA Orange Line Station. The five-minute transportation time area includes the neighborhoods of Ten Hills, East Somerville, and Winter Hill as well as areas across the Mystic River in Medford. The ten-minute transportation time area includes the rest of Somerville, as well as Medford, Malden, and Everett. Households in these effective trade areas are looking for local serving retail, local entertainment, job opportunities with short commute times.

In a location that once housed a Ford Edsel automotive assembly plant, Assembly Row has transformed one of the State's largest brownfield sites into a thriving neighborhood.


Melrose
Wyoming
Middlesex Fells Reservation
Symmes Corner
Pines River Marshes
Malden
Faulkner
Medford
Everett
Revere Beach Pkwy
Revere
Chelsea
Somerville
Cambridge
Boston
Logan International Airport
Charles River Reservation
Cambridge St
Mass Ave
Concord Tpke
Massachusetts Ave
Fellsway
Main St
Broadway
Lynn St
Mystic
Mass Pike
0
0.6
1.2
mi

Assembly Square ESRI Site Map with 2 minute, 5 minute, and 10 minute drive times.

SQUARE RESIDENTS & OCCUPATIONS

Real GDP

Middlesex County has by far the highest Gross Domestic Product (a measure of the goods and services produced in the area) within the State of Massachusetts at $157 billion USD. This helped the City through pandemic recovery and beyond.

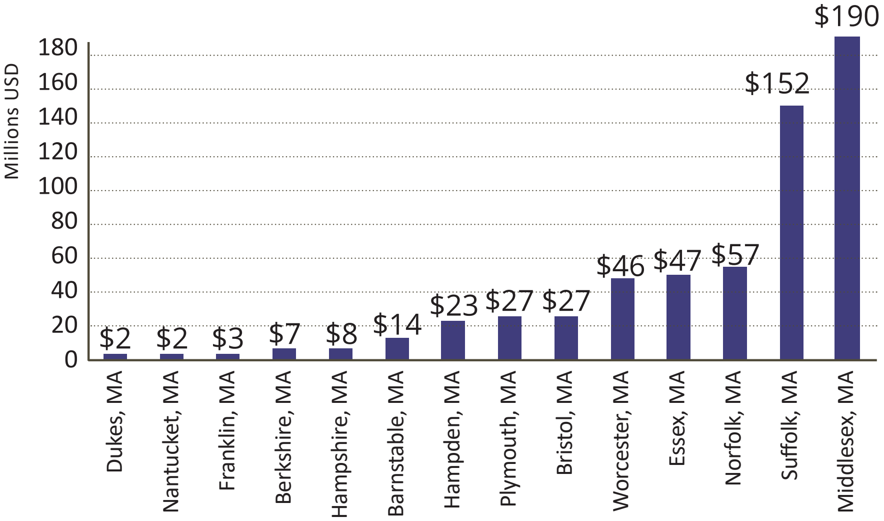
Change in Occupation

Somerville's economic development policies as well as its proximity to the economic engine of Boston have resulted in a shift toward the "knowledge industries," with a remarkable increase in jobs in business management, computer and sciences, and financial services.

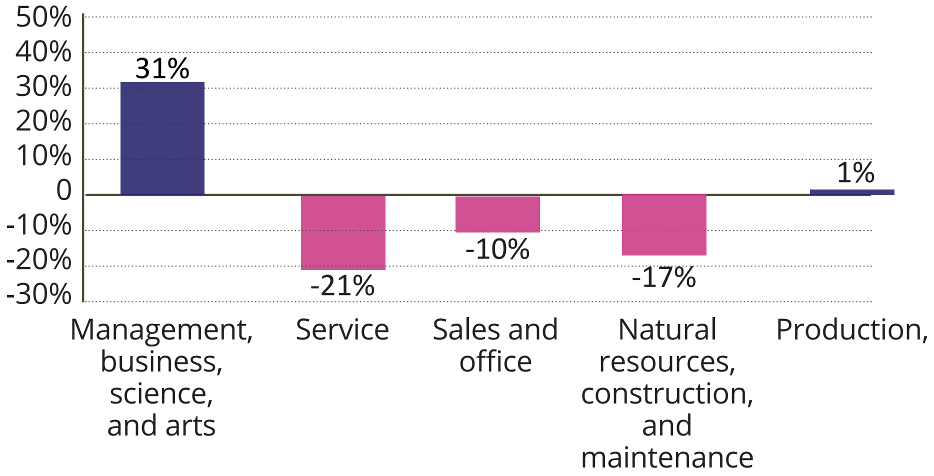
Median Income

Median incomes both now and projected into 2025 are high, showing how different the Assembly Square population is from that of the average Somerville neighborhood. Even with Somerville's recent gains in income growth, Assembly Square is a relatively wealthy area. Local retail amenities will likely reflect the residents' tastes and income levels as average income estimates are higher than the Somerville average.

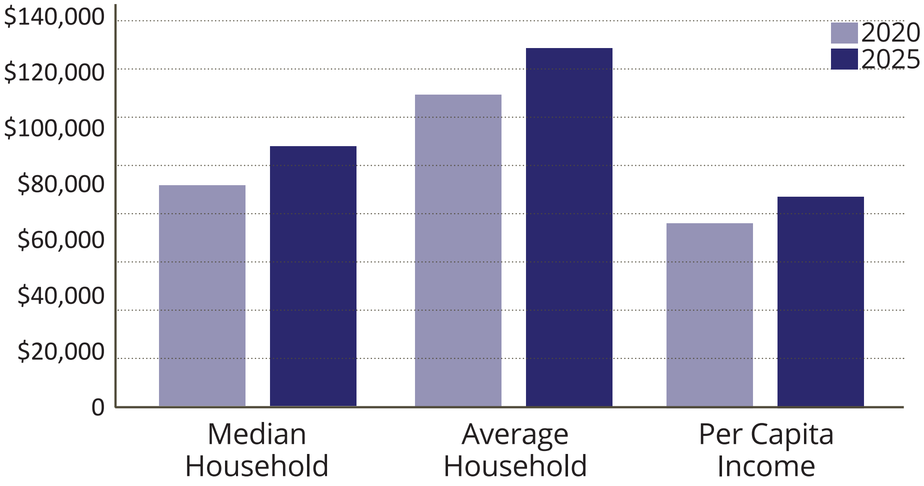
Nearly **1M**
people live within a
15 minute drive
of Assembly Square



Real GDP (chained 2017 dollars) by Metro Area or County in Massachusetts - 2022 ($M - Bureau of Economic Analysis)



Change in occupation by civilian employed population: cumulative change 2015-2022 (US Census ACS)



Estimates of changes to income in Assembly Square: 2020-2025 (ESRI)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Based on analysis, economic data synthesis, stakeholder consultations, and public input, Assembly Square's economic development strategies can be summarized as the following:

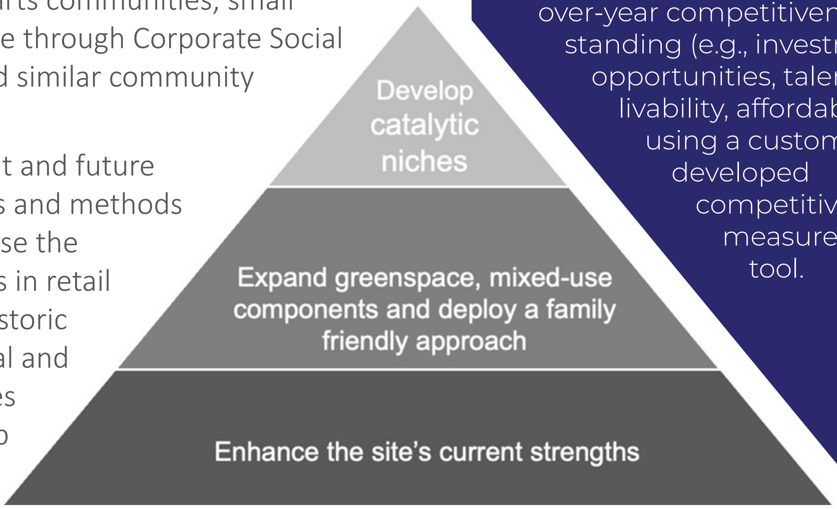
THREE TIERS

1. **Enhance the site's current strengths.** Assembly Square has already proven that it has a strong business cluster effect through key research and laboratory anchor tenants, an established retail base and a growing residential footprint. Now the goal is to expand and deepen these effects by broadening the neighborhood's economic, commercial and office offerings through coordinated branding and conscious cluster development (attracting complementary enterprises of all sizes, diversity, class and type).
2. **Expand greenspace, mixed-use components, and a community-friendly approach.** Assembly Square boasts a large portion of Somerville's one mile of river waterfront access and shoreline. This river's-edge space has the potential to become a more vibrant waterfront park that delights the local community and draws regional visitors year-round. Priority actions include waterfront programming, inventive sustainability, resiliency projects that also enhance recreation opportunities, and increased workforce housing with an expanded variety of housing types.
3. **Develop new catalytic niches that complement the commercial foot-print.** While commercial space is key to tax revenues, a balanced neighborhood needs more "soft-power" investments that can bring net gains to the local economy. Priority actions include promoting investments to attract the education and the arts communities, small footprint markets, and doing more through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs and similar community investments.

These strategies apply to both current and future opportunities while providing policies and methods to address growth challenges. They use the City's existing and emerging strengths in retail establishments, community fabric, historic areas, a relatively diversified industrial and service base, and growing life sciences clusters. They can be taken as a group or individually.

THE EXPECTED OUTCOMES FROM THESE ACTIONS INCLUDE:

1. Increasing new market entrants in Assembly Square and providing a supportive environment to allow for a doubling of smaller-scale business on site.
2. Doubling the number of permanent residents on site and creating a plan to attract different household types and families by offering larger units.
3. Increasing the number of employed persons by at least 5% every year, drawing from both unemployed persons and those out of the workforce. Increasing satisfaction as measured by a consistent tool by at least 10% annually among residents and businesses when doing business with the city.
4. Raising satisfaction scores (as measured by a consistent tool) by at least 10% annually among residents and businesses who are doing business with the City.
5. Improving the City's year-over-year competitiveness standing (e.g., investment, opportunities, talent, livability, affordability) using a custom-developed competitiveness measurement tool.


Develop catalytic niches
Expand greenspace, mixed-use components and deploy a family friendly approach
Enhance the site's current strengths

Three tiers to support the site's economic development potential as part of the Assembly Square neighborhood plan

TIER 1: ENHANCE THE SITE'S CURRENT STRENGTHS

Tier 1 seeks to foster existing trends within Assembly Square and promote the continuation of factors that have made it a dynamic location for business and retail in Somerville.

Maximize business cluster effects

Clusters are important for metro region economic development organizations and offer a framework to support business competitiveness. Established anchors such as Mass General Brigham, Puma Boston HQ, and Assembly Row can serve as a foundation for establishing clusters — more interconnected companies, start-ups, specialized vendors, service providers and education players.

- Review and strengthen City-led efforts to attract biotech, laboratory, and the broader health and science sectors.
- Enhance cluster effects with stronger efforts to attract and retain supply chain participants for the main corporate anchors already on site.

Define the neighborhood as more than retail

While retail forms a backbone for the site, it's not just national brands that can thrive here. Local and regional market concepts are an easy win to build a broader, more inclusive brand for Assembly Square. The site's visibility, access to the waterfront, history, and commercial attributes can also be emphasized.

- Establish a working group with broader stakeholder representation to create and promote an area-wide identity to use in specific efforts to support the overall site and long-term neighborhood vision.

Assembly Row

PARTNERS HEALTHCARE
PARTNERS HEALTHCARE

Mass General Brigham
(formerly Partners Health)

Proposed new development

Baxter Park events

Increase the use of financing tools to support social goals

Developers and investors have an increasing number of options they can use as they plan new projects; these can be coupled with clear social and community objectives. These objectives could include transportation, housing, environmental quality, energy and sustainability.

- Collate all available incentives including District Increment Financing (DIF), Tax Increment Financing (TIF), property tax abatements, etc., and offer a web-based tool that developers can use to estimate the impact of incentives on their proposed projects.
- Promote the tool on the City's SomerVision website, and through email, banner advertising and paid search.

Consider additional Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) that align City and private goals

City-owned assets and the City's ability to provide non-traditional financing mechanisms can be used to achieve social goals through PPPs. Such projects could include providing City assets (such as land, access points and transportation options) at low or reduced rates to improve community outcomes across a broad range of activities. These partnerships provide flexibility to developers and tenants while allowing the City to selectively experiment with how best to use its limited resources for outcomes that align market realities with social goals.

- Experiment with tax increments to pay for the difference between market and affordable rents. In this version of a master leasing concept, the City acts as the lessee and guarantees payment to the building owner of the difference between market rent and tenant rent for a fixed period.
- Use corporate social responsibility (CSR) commitments in a dedicated fund as loan-loss reserves (or something similar) that can indirectly support larger affordable housing initiatives and "owner-operated" enterprises.

Take into account the revenue generation potential of projects in Assembly Square

Assembly Square is essential to contributing to the City's long-term funding goals through tax generation. Keeping a well-balanced mix of uses will be key to ensuring this objective. All new developments should estimate net tax revenues to the City as part of their permitting (as per the existing legal agreement) to strengthen the tax base and add to the area's employment base.

- Require new development projects to estimate their net tax contributions (total taxable increases to the area less assumed City service provision).
- Maintain a potential net taxable contribution summary for undeveloped or underdeveloped parcels to estimate the remaining possible net tax generation available under current zoning.

TIER 2: EXPAND GREEN SPACE, THE MIX OF USES, AND A FAMILY-FRIENDLY APPROACH

Tier 2 aims to expand emerging trends to create a more nuanced area. The focus would be on an environment with a broad appeal for all types of residents and visitors to create a heightened competitive advantage. Assembly Square can be a truly mixed-use place that fully incorporates the waterfront and other uses that are community-inclusive, flexible, and support a year-round neighborhood culture in Somerville.

Expand and bring the waterfront and park lands into the economy; showcase sustainability

Community feedback is unanimous: the waterfront could be developed more from both a design and an activity perspective. Suggested ideas include additional recreational options, environmental and ecological education, history of the site, and more. A deeper commitment to a waterfront park in the form of bioedges, rain gardens, and demonstration stream gauges is desirable.

- Embrace designs that enhance green spaces.
- Promote and support sustainability projects with clear environmental impact reduction objectives (e.g., environment, flood control/resiliency).
- Emphasize the waterfront profile in efforts to identify Assembly Square as a cohesive neighborhood.
- Establish a waterfront park programming working group to introduce activities/offerings to cover all four seasons (e.g., ice skating in winter).
- Consider allowing small-scale retail within the waterfront parks (cart, bicycle, or similar).

Build out site with attention to health effects and sustainability

The site's proximity to major highways creates concern regarding more airborne pollutants (e.g., PM2.5) and decreases in overall air quality indicators. Climate-related impacts such as a rise in water level and potential flooding may impinge on the site. Promoting standards that integrate adaptation and mitigation options (e.g., energy and water use) will be key to a manageable environmental footprint. This approach would support business competitiveness as well as differentiate the area from similar regional sites.

- Assess and account for air quality impacts from the I-93 roadway and other major thoroughfares.
- Consider promoting net-zero buildings as demonstration sites with particular emphasis on indoor air quality.
- Limit or restrict residential development along Middlesex Avenue near I-93/Route 28. Promote more commercial uses (e.g., laboratory and biotech, biomedicine and other advanced science uses).

Experiment with affordable housing financing tools for workforce or middle-income housing

The site's current residential development footprint is small (though likely to expand) and generally seen as serving the luxury market. As Somerville has become more affluent, workforce housing needs have lagged—and these needs are being clearly articulated by the community. Typically, workforce or middle-income housing is affordable for households earning between 80-120% of the Area Median Income (AMI). Workforce housing targets middle-income workers, a group which includes police officers, City workers, firefighters, teachers, health care workers, retail clerks and those with similar jobs.

- Create a dedicated workforce housing trust fund, repurpose vacant land, and underutilized retail/commercial space, allow greater flexibility as part of the inclusionary zoning mandates and/or update the development codes.
- Work with the affordable housing division and developers to bring more workforce housing into new developments using tax increments, specific bond issuances or an area-wide housing trust fund that offsets the development cost gap inherent in affordable housing.
- Experiment with non-traditional funding approaches for public policy goals, such as using a master leasing structure to allow for lower-cost entry to the retail market for local artists or entrepreneurs.

Encourage a broader (in both size and tenure) range of residential units

For the Assembly Square neighborhood to appeal to more types of residents, units with a greater variety of overall size, bedroom counts, and ownership possibilities are needed. The surrounding existing neighborhoods of East Somerville and Ten Hills have a good stock of larger units with more bedrooms and traditional single-family houses. Strengthening the connections to these areas provides a wider range of housing types to help round out the site's demographic concentration. Increasing opportunities for home ownership will contribute to a less transient environment that rental units can sometimes create. In addition, the introduction of an expanded variety of housing types would allow for other mixed uses to take root: education, day care, and parks.

- Work with developers to increase the quantity and availability of three- and four-bedroom units in Assembly Square to attract different household types (market rate and affordable/workforce AMI targeted).
- Encourage developers to provide additional residential units for sale.

TIER 3: ENCOURAGE ECONOMIC DYNAMISM BY HOSTING SMALL AND INNOVATIVE BUSINESSES

Tier 3 focuses on attracting small, dynamic businesses that provide a distinctive character and help build a sense of community among residents and enterprises.

Attract area artists, vendors, and small, inventive retail

Somerville has the highest number of resident artists of any city in New England; with nearly 5% of adults working as artists in 2022. As the Assembly Square neighborhood matures, it can embrace this rich legacy by hosting arts-oriented mercantile and community spaces such as galleries, studios, and markets that can house the city's many small, independent arts entrepreneurs who seek access to exhibition spaces and loyal customers. Encouraging art-oriented commercial activity to Assembly Square can help generate tourist-friendly public art that can link artists to the built environment in ways that enhance Assembly Square and provide an iconic look and feel to the area.

- Leverage local and regional entrepreneurship programs to encourage the growth of small businesses, particularly those run by artists and creatives. Focus on obtaining grants to support marketing, accounting, networking, mentoring, and overall business strategy.
- Partner with local and regional arts organizations to connect artists with assistance programs and services.
- Permit and encourage small vendors to sell goods from pushcarts, food trucks, and temporary "popup" spaces.
- Identify locations within Assembly Square for public art initiatives.
- Sponsor arts competitions, parades, and other grassroots events to increase public participation in the design process.
- Encourage development of affordable retail spaces distributed across new building projects and support local, independent entrepreneurs to successfully lease them.

Visible Storage, Victoria & Albert Museum

Turn Assembly Square into a creative and educational outpost through savvy nonprofit partnerships

Somerville and the Boston region is rich in educational and cultural institutions. Many of these organizations seek to enhance their relevance by supporting arts production, cultural programming, and job creation. Many educational and arts institutions already perform storage or retail functions, but many of their facilities remain inaccessible to the public. Assembly Square's transit/highway access, public spaces, and daytime density make it an ideal location for experimental mini-satellite spaces. Assembly Square can host these types of institutions and develop into an educational and cultural cluster.

- Promote Assembly Square to regional educational and cultural institutions as a satellite location for support functions such as conservation, storage, education outreach, and more.

Bow Market

- Promote Assembly Square as a satellite location for classrooms, studios, and temporary or seasonal workspaces.
- Explore blending cutting-edge technology with existing assets and underserved educational niches (such as childhood education) to bring a completely unique offering to the area.

Use smaller-footprint retail to mirror successes

Many of Somerville's food halls and local markets are proven winners in the fiercely competitive retail environment. Assembly Square can use similar smaller-footprint market models and apply a different twist to the formula. Taking a cue from an incubator model, Assembly Square could offer a market space where businesses scale and grow—where metro neighbors, students, entrepreneurs, artists, and tourists come together to create and shape a community to call their own. Experimental kitchens, local restaurants, and temporary retail businesses seeking permanent spaces are exciting options.

- Engage with retail and marketplace developers to determine how to integrate the arts and small-scale creative retail into their plans.
- Consider a full or partial arts overlay district for Assembly Square, perhaps focused at Assembly Point or Assembly South areas.
- Work with community creators to bring existing events, cultural and recreation programs to Assembly Square during all four seasons (e.g., ice skating in winter, etc.).

Pursue Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funding for Assembly Square's arts and cultural programming

As Assembly Square matures with continual development, the City should convince leaders of large area businesses to allocate corporate responsibility (CSR) funds to Assembly Square. Whether they fund green space or climate adaptation improvements, diversity and inclusion initiatives or the arts, their corporate funds could make the kind of impact they desire. Assembly Square's development could provide a showcase of how to maximize CSR impacts for both the corporate sponsors and area recipients.

- Reach out to major Assembly Square commercial interests as well as local and city-wide corporate and other business interests (e.g., family office and area philanthropic groups) to discuss directing some of their CSR funding to Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan's recommendations.
- Solicit a pipeline of CSR-funded projects that align with and support Somerville's goals for the Assembly Square neighborhood.

WHAT IS CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)?

Corporate social responsibility is a self-regulating business model that helps a company be socially accountable—to itself, its stakeholders, and the public. By practicing corporate social responsibility, companies can be conscious of the kind of impact they are having on all aspects of society, including economic, social, and environmental.

To engage in CSR means that, in the ordinary course of business, a company is operating in ways that enhance society and the environment, instead of contributing negatively to

FISCAL ANALYSIS MODEL & SCENARIOS

A fiscal impact analysis projects the financial benefits and costs to the public sector in terms of taxes and other revenues in relation to expenses to provide services. While an economic impact analysis, which is often measured in income or output, projects the cash flow to the private sector. The fundamental question is whether forecasted revenues generated by future growth and development are sufficient to cover forecasted expenditures related to service demands which would result from this same growth and development. The motivation for this fiscal impact model at the neighborhood planning level stems from a need to integrate government's costs and revenues with its land use decision making and comprehensive planning.

A fiscal impact evaluation analyzes revenue generation and operating costs to a jurisdiction associated with the provision of public services and capital facilities to serve development. For example: the type of residential units drives the number of people and, therefore, possible school enrollment. Then, this population and school enrollment would drive school operating costs, capital facility needs, and emergency services. On the revenue (income) side, nonresidential development is a key driver for fiscal results due to higher taxes and development fees. The scenarios within this analysis are designed to calculate the city's expenses and revenues for proposed development and allow us to evaluate the costs and benefits of alternate land uses. However, they should reflect market realities as much as possible as well as considering the existing capacities in municipal services and infrastructure.

Scenarios

Long-range planning exercises encourage the city's residents to think big. Therefore, significant infrastructure investments are often required to implement a neighborhood's vision for growth. While fiscal impacts are only part of a myriad of public decisions, the analysis helps by describing the projected financial costs and benefits as part of a larger discussion of policy. The study begins with the existing conditions and a "no build" assumption - no changes just business continuing as is within the study area. This provides a baseline of revenue to compare proposed development options against.

The new scenarios are based on the layout and program shown in the neighborhood plans as a starting point then some variations are considered. Each initial scenario is predicated on the illustrative "full build-out" of the entire study area rather than incremental growth projections since market demands and private property owners control the timeline for any development. The variations, or additional scenarios, are then created by adjusting the program inputs of land uses and/or capital improvement projects that may be necessary over the approximately 30-year timeline for complete development of a neighborhood plan area.

Each of the scenarios includes a baseline evaluation of Capital Investment Plan improvements and maintenance costs that cover the acquisition of land for rights-of-way and the construction of new roads, sidewalks, and underground utilities. All of the scenarios include the acquisition of approximately two acres on blocks H and I, new city-owned and maintained parks throughout the neighborhood, and a "market hall" or other civic building as well as a new library extension facility.

If the civic spaces are privately owned public spaces (POPS) with public access in perpetuity, then there will likely be a slight decrease in revenue in the early years due to crediting the construction work provided against the development fees. However, there would be no Capital Investment Plan necessary for land acquisition and only minimal on-going maintenance costs, which is even further advantageous to the city.

The Assembly neighborhood is already well served by Fire and Police, but new demand is projected with increases for labor and equipment. One of the large variables defining the following scenarios is the possible requirement for building a school to serve the new residential population. While a new physical building is not accounted for in the cost of residential units, the annual cost of education is anticipated. Therefore, we have separate scenarios to model the fiscal impact of building a school.

The scenarios can vary because the land use assumptions can change quite significantly. While a program of jobs, housing, and amenities is needed to create livable neighborhoods, the economic conditions may not support that balance. So, if the commercial office and lab market slows, then more residential development may occur which could create the need for a new school building as mentioned above. In some areas, more open space acquisition may be necessary for filtration to mitigate extreme flooding, or perhaps that flooding requires large underground storage tanks to manage the stormwater. The scenarios also assume that all expenses of the infrastructure required by a projected development program are borne by the city. In other words, the scenarios are fiscally conservative and assume the most expensive case for the costs to the city.

Assembly: Baseline

The existing conditions in the area were measured and form the financial base line as a point of comparison. Although the site is currently dominated by retail uses, new buildings will shift the balance by providing a large amount of office and lab space. These existing conditions do not include the full assessment of the buildings under construction since they are not in the tax assessor's database yet. This baseline is an existing condition, but not a "do-nothing" scenario, it is "business as usual". Therefore, it is anticipated that the current net of tax revenues less operational costs for the city is about $3m annually.

Commercial Heavy Plan: Scenario 1

The first scenario is the full build-out program shown in the draft area plan. This plan includes a mix of retail, office, lab, and residential space which breaks down to approximately 70% of the total gross square feet for commercial uses and about 30% for residential (or approximately 2900 new units). When completed, the new development could generate a net of close to $17 million annually to the city budget.

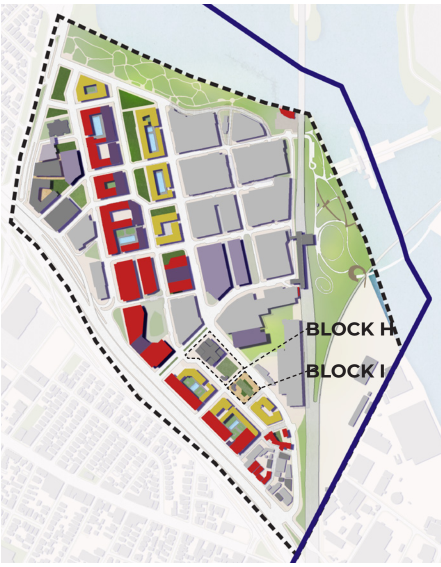
The analysis of this scenario for a 2030 net stabilized revenue-cost would be $16,400,000. Even though the upfront development costs would be higher, and the city would need to borrow (bond) the funding for infrastructure, the long-term benefit is significantly greater than the "business as usual" baseline scenario.

Commercial Heavy Plan + School: Scenario 2

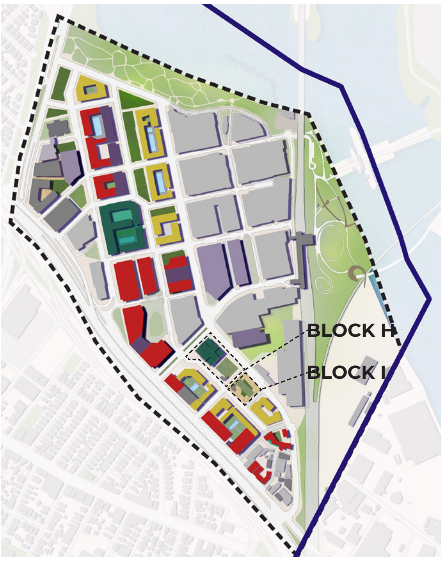
Scenario 2 is similar to Scenario 1 with a significant change to accommodate a school to serve the new residential population. The model assumes that the city purchases an additional 2.5 acres in a central location that was previously identified as commercial use. The school and land costs are predicted to be around $127 million, with an annual bond cost of $7.7 million. Once development is complete, the full program could contribute a net $1.9 million annually to the City.

LEGEND

- 🟥 Commercial (retail,
- 🟪 Mixed-Use
- 🟨 Residential
- 🟩 School
- 🟪 Planned Building
- ⬜ Existing Building
- ⬛ Proposed Building
- 🟩 Proposed Green Space
- 🟩 Existing Green Space



Scenario 1



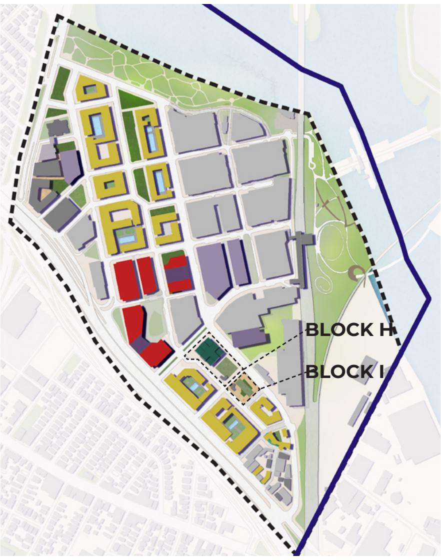
Scenario 2

As the cost of a school and the removal of the site from commercial tax revenue, this scenario is not quite as high as Scenario 1. However, this scenario would serve city goals and still be a net positive for the fiscal bottom line.

Residential Dominant Plan: Scenario 3

Under the current post-COVID market conditions, residential uses appear more profitable for developers than commercial. In the entire metropolitan area, commercial spaces, specifically lab uses, are suffering from high vacancy rates and depressed demand. Scenario 3 considers what the impacts to city costs would be if most of the new development was high-density multi-family residential. Ground floor retail and service business is still assumed for 30% of the program, but 53% of the gross square feet would be residential and the remaining (mostly existing, under construction and permitted) as office or lab. This program would provide around 5700 new residential units and the net contribution of the completed development would be approximately $12.7 million.

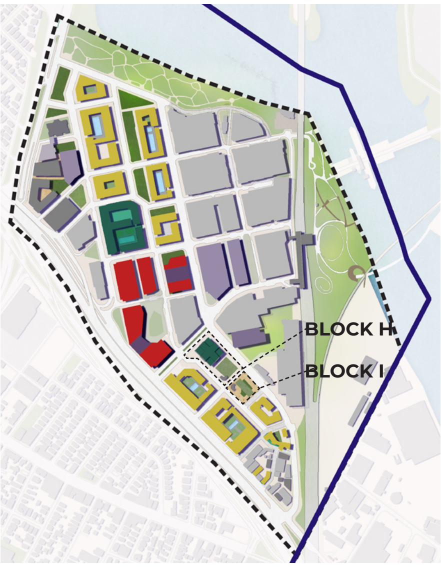
Despite lower revenues generated by residential uses the region is still in a housing crisis, this scenario would serve city goals of providing more housing and living options to our residents as well as still being a net positive for the fiscal bottom line.



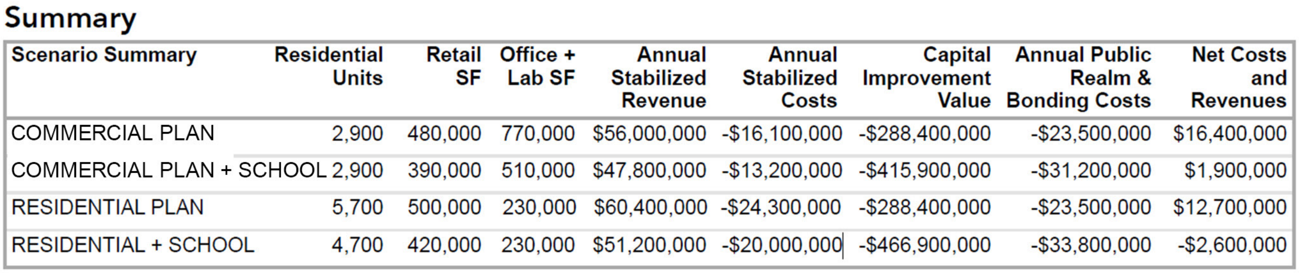
Scenario 3

Residential Dominant + School: Scenario 4

Scenario 4 considers the addition of a public school to service the significant number of potential new residents in the area. Removing this land from private development would reduce the number of new households from Scenario 3 to around 4700. The 2.5-acre site is allocated similarly to Scenario 2, but the cost of a larger 150,000 square foot school and support facilities is estimated at $178 million and would require approximately $10 million of new annual bond payments. Even when development is completed, this scenario would be a loss and have a net cost to the city of approximately $2.6 million per year.



Scenario 4



Summary

Scenario Summary	Residential Units	Retail SF	Office + Lab SF	Annual Stabilized Revenue	Annual Stabilized Costs	Capital Improvement Value	Annual Public Realm & Bonding Costs	Net Costs and Revenues
COMMERCIAL PLAN	2,900	480,000	770,000	$56,000,000	-$16,100,000	-$288,400,000	-$23,500,000	$16,400,000
COMMERCIAL PLAN + SCHOOL	2,900	390,000	510,000	$47,800,000	-$13,200,000	-$415,900,000	-$31,200,000	$1,900,000
RESIDENTIAL PLAN	5,700	500,000	230,000	$60,400,000	-$24,300,000	-$288,400,000	-$23,500,000	$12,700,000
RESIDENTIAL + SCHOOL	4,700	420,000	230,000	$51,200,000	-$20,000,000	-$466,900,000	-$33,800,000	-$2,600,000

7. Implementation

This chapter outlines potential next steps for the City to undertake to realize the plan's vision for the Assembly Square neighborhood.

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

This plan lays out the framework for a coordinated approach to development for the Assembly Square neighborhood. The plan's ideas represent a collective vision for the area created during a collaborative virtual charrette process. Much of what the plan entails is to be carried out by both public and private entities as individual properties are developed over time. In the short term, public sector strategies and action items should be implemented within three to five years to establish the groundwork and regulations for private development. The plan is intended to be flexible. The illustrative plan is an example of what could be done to bring design strategies and an array of stakeholder goals to life.

As properties develop in the years ahead, the property owner will have some flexibility to refine the plan for their parcel to meet their unique needs and account for changing economic conditions and market demand overtime. While no one expects the plan to be implemented exactly as it's been drawn, in developing policy to guide future development, the City should strive to retain key characteristics that can make this district a walkable, mixed use, transit-oriented urban neighborhood.

In the study of successfully planned communities, we find that two types of actions have been critical to achieving desirable outcomes: long-term planning and a willingness to reconsider one's values. Communities work to identify values and then let those values guide action. When a community's development energies are guided by a plan, every new public and private investment is more likely to add to quality of life and not detract from it. Always have a plan, but recognize that the conversation, the act of planning itself, is the most important part.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

The following implementation matrix organizes recommendations found throughout this plan by the same Five Big Ideas discussed in Chapter 3. Each recommendation is accompanied with additional information.

Page	Identifies the page of this document where a reccomendation is discussed. The plans, programs, policies, or regulations reccommended in this plan.
Time Frame	Categorized as short-term or long-term based on the estimated time frame necessary for the responsible party to begin implementation.
Responsible Party	The elected official, board or comission, city department, state agency, or private entity responsible for planning and implementation.
Additional Work	Identifies if an additional plan, program, policy, or regulation must be created for implementation.

1. BUILD GREAT NEW PLACES

Page	Strategy / Activity	Time Frame	Responsible Party	Additonal Work
Strategy 1.1: Create Human-scale and Pedestrian-oriented Buildings and Blocks				
36	Active uses such as retail and restaurants should be encouraged along the ground floor of major pedestrian thoroughfares.	Short-Term	PPZ City Council	Regulation
36	Require the length of blocks to be no more than 600' and ideally not more than 450'. Where the length requirement is not achievable, a mid-block passage should be designed for pedestrians.	Short-Term	PPZ City Council	Regulation
37	Require or incentivize new development to achieve the urban design, open space, density, land use, sustainability, and parking recommendations of this plan.	Short-Term	PPZ City Council	Regulation
Strategy 1.2: Create Welcoming Public Spaces and Amenities				
37	Encourage, reserve or otherwise acquire land for public amenities such as a performing arts space, library, fire station, grocery store, late-night pharmacy, dog park, and play spaces within the Assembly Square neighborhood.	Long-Term	Economic Development Capital Projects	
37	Require new residential developments to include playgrounds and tot lots within a five-minute walk of most households.	Short-Term	PPZ City Council	Regulation

2. INCREASE ACCESS TO NATURE AND BUILD SUSTAINABLY

Page	Strategy / Activity	Time Frame	Responsible Party	Additonal Work
Strategy 2.1: Develop Sustainable Buildings and Infrastructure				
56	Assess existing utilities infrastructure throughout	Long-	Engineering	
56	Perform a comprehensive analysis of existing	Short-	Engineering	
56	Evaluate the impact of each building addition, deletion, or renovation on the affected utilities.	Short-Term	Engineering	
56	Coordinate with Somerville Department of Public Works and licensed plumbing engineers to determine if mains need to be maintained, upgraded, or added throughout the development.	Short-Term	Engineering	
56	Design additional drainage infrastructure to convey roof and pavement runoff from the development into the existing drainage system to be discharged elsewhere due to MassDEP's concern with infiltration into polluted soil beneath the project area.	Long-Term	Property Owners Engineering	
38	Continue to require all new buildings in Assembly Square achieve the highest standards for green buildings.	Short-Term	PPZ & OSE City Council	
Strategy 2.2: Increase Access to Parks				
38	Establish a trail network that connects the parks and open spaces within Assembly Square.	Long-Term	PSUF Property Owners	
38	Create pockets of green space for gathering and seating along the trail network.	Long-Term	PSUF Property Owners	
38	Create a central 'Square' to become the heart of the neighborhood.	Long-Term	PSUF Property Owners	
38	Use wayfinding and signage to highlight the connection of a complete loop of park space, civic space, and trails within Assembly Square as well as how those networks connect to the surrounding area.	Short-Term	PSUF Mobility	
38	Require trees and native plants along all trails to provide shade and create habitat for pollinators and wildlife.	Long-Term	PSUF Property Owners	
Strategy 2.3: Set Proper Energy Goals and Design Criteria				
39	Set district-wide energy and carbon reduction goals instead of on a project-by-project basis to allow design flexibility.	Short-Term	OSE	Policy
39	New development projects in Assembly Square should use drainage design criteria that reflects future projections and climate change trends.	Short-Term	Engineering OSE	Policy

3. DESIGN SAFE, COMFORTABLE AND INTERESTING STREETS AND PATHS AND INCREASE TRANSIT AVAILABILITY

Page	Strategy / Activity	Time Frame	Responsible Party	Additonal Work
Strategy 3.1: Build Streets that are Safe, Comfortable and Interesting				
82	Remove the right turn pockets and reduce the curb radii between Fellsway and Grand Union Boulevard/ Middlesex Avenue to discourage high-speed turning movements by motorists, and expand the pedestrian area to create shorter crossing distances.	Long-Term	Mobility Engineering	Policy
82	Reduce the number of lanes on Fellsway, and reduce accepting lanes on Grand Union Boulevard.	Long-Term	Mobility Engineering	Specific Plan
88	Improve the Kensington Connector with public art and lighting.	Long-Term	MassDOT	Specific Plan
98	Adopt and implement the street sections in the Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan.	Short-Term	Mobility Engineering	Specific Plan
92	Implement improvements to the Lombardi Street intersection with Mystic Avenue.	Long-Term	Mobility Engineering	Specific Plan
90	Implement improvements to the Middlesex Avenue intersection with Mystic Avenue.	Long-Term	Mobility Engineering	Specific Plan
80	Explore the reduction of the I-93 footprint by clearing up the entrance and exit ramps.	Long-Term	Mobility MassDOT	Specific Plan
80	Explore the removal of the Fellsway tunnel under I-93 footprint by clearing up the entrance and exit ramps.	Long-Term	Mobility MassDOT	Specific Plan
Strategy 3.2: Prioritize Bicycling				
41	Incorporate dedicated bicycle lanes / cycle tracks on all major streets.	Long-Term	Mobility Engineering	
110	Install Bluebikes facilities at the authorized and proposed locations within the Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan.	Long-Term	BlueBikes	
Strategy 3.3: Expand and Improve Transit Services				
6,40	Increase frequency of the Orange Line and Route 90 Buses.	Long-Term	Mobility MBTA	
6	Add additional bus services connecting Assembly Square to other parts of Somerville.	Long-Term	Mobility MBTA	
6	Modify Route 90 to incorporate more stops within Assembly Square.	Long-Term	Mobility MBTA	
Strategy 3.4: Increase Transportation Demand Management				
109	In addition to the baseline requirements for transportation demand management, new development should also provide: · Subsidized transit passes for all employees · Public parking offered at market rate prices, and · Employee parking charged directly at market rate prices.	Short-Term	Mobility	Program

4. GROW REVENUE-GENERATING USES FOR SOMERVILLE

Page	Strategy / Activity	Time Frame	Responsible Party	Additonal Work
Strategy 4.1: Enhance the Site's Current Strengths				
42	Enhance the wayfinding signage and add a new entrance over the rail line by Revolution Drive.	Long-Term	PSUF Mobility	
42	Create a more vibrant waterfront park with community events programming and sustainable projects at the river's edge that serve the local community and regional visitors year round.	Long-Term	PSUF Property Owners	
42	Expand the area of the waterfront park to increase event capacity.	Long-Term	PSUF Property Owners	
43	Continue to work with the site's developers on economic development program design that maintains and achieves a new avenue of economic growth. Consider additional "Public Private Partnerships PPP's" that align city and private goals.	Long-Term	Economic Development	
43	Adjusting the existing code or create additional standards to reflect the community's vision for the Assembly Square neighborhood.	Short-Term	PPZ City Council	Regulation
120	Increase the use of financing tools (DIF/TIF, property tax abatements, etc) to support social goals. Use Floor Area Rations (FAR) or similar area measures to promote tradable development rights.	Long-Term	Economic Development	Program
Strategy 4.2: Expand the City's Non-residential Tax Base				
42	Include a diversity of uses at Assembly Square and expand the City's non-residential tax base.	Long-Term	Property Owners	
118	Enhance business cluster effects by broadening the neighborhood's economic, commercial and office offerings through coordinated branding of the entire neighborhood, and consciously attracting complementary enterprises of all sizes, diversity, class, and type.	Short-Term	Economic Development	
43	Create a market space that serves as an incubator where businesses can grow and scale. The entrepreneurs, residents, students, and artists can come together to shape the future of the community.	Long-Term	Economic Development	
43	Enhance Assembly Square as a life-science center by creating and supporting a real neighborhood to attract businesses, employees, and residents.	Long-Term	Economic Development	
111	Increase the price of parking and create a pricing structure for parking at all Assembly Square parking locations.	Short-Term	Property Owners	

Page	Strategy / Activity	Time Frame	Responsible Party	Additonal Work
Strategy 4.3: Develop New Catalytic Niches				
43	Attract and promote investments in the arts community, along with small foot-print, inventive retailers.	Long-Term	Arts Council Economic Development	
43	Seek out monies and investments from corporate social responsibility programss and other similar community investment sources.	Long-Term	Economic Development	
123	Partner with Boston area and local arts organizations to support connecting artists to city programs and to bring new ideas to city officials.	Long-Term	Arts Council Economic Development	Program
123	Identify target areas within Assembly Square for public art initiatives. Consider competitions and other mechanisms to increase public participation in the design process.	Short-Term	Arts Council Property Owners	Program
123	Experiment with affordable retail spaces that are distributed across new developments and work hand-in-hand with additional financial support to them.	Long-Term	Property Owners	
123	Treat local business (particularly non-chain and micro-businesses) as targets for affordable support to allow artists and other entrepreneurs to access the market through fixed locations.	Long-Term	Economic Development	Program
123	Build / expand existing business incubator functions that provide small businesses with support for their growth, through mentoring, networking, and connections to others for marketing, branding, accounting and overall business strategy.	Long-Term	Economic Development	Program
123	Engage educational and cultural institutions to promote Assembly Square as a satellite location.	Long-Term	Economic Development	

5. CONNECT PHYSICALLY AND SOCIALLY TO SOMERVILLE AND CULTIVATE THE ASSEMBLY COMMUNITY

Page	Strategy / Activity	Time Frame	Responsible Party	Additonal Work
Strategy 5.1: Strengthen Physical and Social Connection				
44	Support projects that enhance the physical connections between Assembly Square and adjacent neighborhoods such as improving the Kensington Connector, and making Fellsway easier to cross on foot or bike.	Long-Term	Mobility	
44	Add a bike/pedestrian bridge to cross the river.	Long-Term	Mobility MassDOT	
44	Improve the access to Draw Seven Park by constructing a connection over the rails near the Orange Line station by Revolution Drive.	Long-Term	Mobility	
44	Support the social infrastructure of business improvement districts, main street associations, neighborhood and homeowner associations specific to Assembly Square.	Long-Term	Economic Development	
Strategy 5.2: Enhance the Assembly Square Neighborhood Identity				
45	Provide spaces for art, and incorporating art into the streetscape and public spaces allow artists to connect to the neighborhood and make authentic spaces that are artistic and chic, and completely unique to Assembly Square.	Long-Term	Economic Development	
45	Ensure that there is cohesion and flow between the buildings and within the public realm in street design, furnishings, and wayfinding signage that help Assembly Square to establish its unique identity.	Long-Term	Urban Design Commission	
Strategy 5.3: Cultivate the Assembly Square Community				
45	Encourage a broader range of residential units in both size and tenure.	Long-Term	Housing	
45	Encourage locally-owned, micro-chain, family-operated, and startup businesses in Assembly Square. Allow short-term leases or reduce rents to operations that help achieve local distinctiveness.	Long-Term	Economic Development	
123	Allow / enhance the ability of small vendors to sell from pushcarts, food trucks, and temporary sales areas.	Long-Term	Economic Development City Council	Program Regulation
Strategy 5.4: Experiment with Affordable Housing Financing Tools				
122	Work with the Housing Division of OSPCD and developers to bring more workforce housing into new developments using tax increments, specific bond issuances or an area-wide housing trust fund that can offset the cost gap inherent to developing affordable housing.	Long-Term	Housing	Program
122	Experiment using non-traditional funding approaches for public policy goals, such as using a master leasing structure to allow for lower cost retail market entry for local artists or entrepreneurs.	Long-Term	Property Owners	